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# U.S. Based Reality Television on the College Campus: An Analysis of Viewing Patterns Based on Gender

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**U.S. Based Reality Television on the College Campus: An Analysis of Viewing Patterns based  
on Gender.**

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**Thesis Advisor:  
Professor Richard Dool**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Masters of Arts in Corporate and Public Communications  
Seton Hall University  
South Orange, N.J.**

**2006**

### Abstract

The television set has been a popular electronic device in the U.S. for over eighty years. Not only has the technology of the television changed, but so has the popularity of various television genres. Over the past decade, reality television is one specific category that has swarmed the networks and impacted the ratings. In the early 1990's there were a few well-known popular reality programs like *The Real World* and *Cops*, today there have been well over 300 different reality shows created and aired. It is hard to determine whether or not this genre has been overdone. It is also tough to know whether or not networks will continue to use this inexpensive form of broadcasting and continue to add more reality programs to their listings.

The college demographic consisting of individuals between the ages of 18 – 23 has been living with reality television since a very young age. Even though ratings companies are only now starting to observe how much television is watched by this market, it has been determined that they do influence the overall ratings scales. More specifically, research has shown that female college students have different television viewership patterns than males. Based on my research I have recognized a need to study the college market and determine their television viewing habits and their feelings towards the popular genre known as reality television.

From what I have researched, there has never been a study conducted on U.S. based reality television on the college campus as it relates to gender. The following research will help to determine what U.S. college students prefer to watch on television, if they watch reality television, and why they watch reality television. This genre of television is a staple in network scheduling and it is not time to research the reasons why.

### **Acknowledgements**

There are so many people that I would like to thank for making it possible for me to complete this study and my degree. First and foremost I would like to thank Professor Dool, his advice and assistance kept me feeling positive through the past year. Secondly, I want to thank my family, friends, and co-workers here at Seton Hall University. Without your continuous encouragement this would not have been possible. Your patience has been more than I could have ever wished for.

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## Chapter 1: Why Reality TV on the College Campus?

### Introduction

Reality television, how did we live without it? Although reality television dates well back into the 1940s, with shows such as *Candid Camera*, it has been over the last decade that this genre has taken America by storm. There have been over three hundred reality television shows on air. Whether the program dropped after one season, like ABC's *The Benefactor* and Fox's *My Big Fat Obnoxious Boss*, or aired for nine seasons, like CBS's *Survivor*, reality television has changed the face of the television entertainment industry. The chart below provides a typical week of television in October, 2005. As you can see in Table 1, during the week of October 21<sup>st</sup> through 27<sup>th</sup>, there were fifty-eight reality television shows on air. Prior to this fall's primetime television season, major U.S. broadcast networks and their cable competitors, made it very clear that reality television was going to have a dominant presence in years to come.

Table 1

*A Calendar of All Reality Television Aired During the Week of October 21<sup>st</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005.*

Reality TV Calendar - This Week			
RTV Calendar	8/7c	9/8c	10/9c
Friday Oct. 21	Supernanny - ABC What Not To Wear - TLC Next 8:30 - MTV	Three Wishes - NBC How Do I Look? - Style Amazing Race 1 - GSN	Ballroom Bootcamp - TLC
Saturday Oct. 22	Diary Of An Affair - Style Moving Up - TLC	Amazing Race 1 - GSN Trading Spaces - TLC Diary Of An Affair - Style	Diary Of An Affair - Style
Sunday Oct. 23	EM:Home Edition - ABC Chaotic - VH1 Reality Showstoppers - TVGC	Family Plots - A & E The Restaurant - CNBC	Intervention - A & E
Monday Oct. 24	Wife Swap - ABC American Hot Rod - Discovery Making The Band - MTV	Laguna Beach - MTV Amazing Race - GSN Growing Up Gotti - A & E	Laguna Beach / Miss 17 - VH1 Survivor - OLN Airline - A & E
Tuesday Oct. 25	Biggest Loser - NBC ANTM 5 (R) - UPN Real World - MTV	Amazing Race 8 - CBS Dog The Bounty Hunter - A & E Overhaulin' (N) - TLC	Real World - MTV Dog The Bounty Hunter - A & E Survivor - OLN
Wednesday Oct. 26	America's Next Top Model 5 - UPN Three Wishes - NBC Dog The Bounty Hunter - A & E	Apprentice: Martha Stewart - NBC Inked - A & E Amazing Race - GSN	Made - MTV Survivor - OLN Miami Ink - TLC
Thursday Oct. 27	Survivor Guatemala - CBS Appr. Martha Stewart (R) - CNBC Cops - FX	The Apprentice - NBC Amazing Race - GSN Making The Band - MTV	Survivor - OLN Cops - FX Making The Band - MTV

(Reality TV Calendar, 2005)

In the beginning of the reality television craze, many wondered how long this trend of programming would last. In 2001, millions watched as Alex Michel was introduced to 25 single women and a unique opportunity to find true love on the program called *The Bachelor*. This romance-based reality program had a number of spin-offs or clone programs like, *The Bachelorette*, *Average Joe*, *Joe Millionaire*, and *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire*. It is unclear whether viewers tuned in for the romance factor or for the sheer joy of watching the drama and competition evolve amongst the women in the house.



Competitive-based reality television is a second style that has been apparent since the start of this genre. Even though romance-based programs did show an enormous amount of competition between the contestants, network producers introduced shows in which the purpose was to win an individual or group challenge. CBS started this trend with *Survivor*. On this program, 16 strangers are placed on a deserted island for 45 days. Typically the strongest person, both mentally and physically, has to be the last remaining survivor on the island to win a prize valued at one million dollars. One contestant is eliminated per week by tribal councils, or the teams the cast has been divided into. Over its course of being on the air for over five years and nine seasons, this show has remained in the top ten ratings slot. I will go into more detail on this program and other competitive-based reality shows later in my research.

A third popular style of reality television that has been around the longest is documentary-based. In other words, networks simply place real people in real life situations and put videotapes through their house, car, work office, etc. The ever popular *Real World* and current big hit *Laguna Beach* are two prime examples of shows that are trying to capture human behavior. Whether a character is happy, sad, angry, anxious, confused, or any of the above, it will be on camera and over a million American's will be watching. The *Real World*, which has been on air since 1992, has proven that American's love to observe the drama, issues, and conflicts that young adults struggle with on a daily basis.

Lifestyle/makeover-based is the fourth genre of reality television. I chose to mix these two styles because of their similar objectives. A few shows that fall into this category are NBC's *The Biggest Loser* and Fox's *The Swan*. Participants may apply to be on one of these programs because they are searching for a change. Things like fashion, home decorating, weight loss, and cosmetic surgery are all hot topics among this genre. The point of this type of reality show is to

make a positive transition for the cast member. For example, on MTV's show called *Made*, candidates embark on a mission to try to break out of their shell and find out who they really are. Each episode features one young adult being coached to fulfill a lifelong goal.

The final style of reality television that I plan to focus on is talent-based programs. NBC's *The Apprentice*, UPN's *American's Next Top Model*, and Fox's *American Idol* are just a couple of the shows that are amongst this genre. These shows, although competitive, center on one main talent, whether it be singing, dancing, cooking, or modeling. Fox's *American Idol*, currently entering its fifth season, is a show focusing on vocal talent. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary people audition and compete in front of three judges to become the next "American Idol." After weeks of try-outs and finally a televised competition of the twelve best singers, American gets to cast its vote and choose which person is most talented. The ultimate winner of this contest is awarded with a record album and contract. All five types of reality television styles mentioned above will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two of this paper.

When choosing this topic for research, I decided to analyze my own television viewing habits. Here is a look at how television impacts my typical day. After the alarm goes off signaling it is time get up and get ready for work, the first thing I do is click on the *Weather Channel* and see what the day is going to be like. After this I usually skim by a morning news programs, like *Good Morning America*, and see if there are any major news headlines I should be aware of. I will keep either this channel or ESPN on for the remainder of my morning simply to have some background noise while I get ready for another workday. The next time I find myself in front of the television is normally at the end of the workday when I am at the gym. Whether I am running or lifting, I will program my walkman to a corresponding television in order to have a distraction during my workout. At this time, it is usually the news or a repeat sitcom, like

*Friends*, that will grab my attention. The last time during the day that I watch television, which is rare, is at the end of the day. Primetime television is the only time that I have set shows or programs that gain my full attention. A lot of the shows I tune into are the ones I always hear my friends or co-workers discussing. Often times I do not want to be left out of a conversation, so I try to catch the shows that seem to be gaining the spotlight. Reality television is something that I have a large interest in and that I watch on a frequent basis. However, with my tight schedule between work and graduate school, my television viewing hours are very limited. I think television acts as a release from everyday stress. For me, and probably a large number of viewers in the world, it is a relaxing escape. Whether it is to laugh at a comedy, cry at a drama, or route for a contestant in a reality television series, we all need some sort of distraction from everyday life.

Now that I have offered my television viewing habits, it is time to change gears and focus on full-time undergraduate college students and their television patterns. On average an American college student is participating in 3 hours of classes per day. Besides, sleeping, studying, working, and sports, this leaves a lot of time for television. Whether it's watching television while doing homework or with friends, some students have a lot of spare time for the tube. Additionally, Generation Y, which consists of those born in the 1980's and 1990's, has grown up with reality television. In 1992, when those seven strangers moved into MTV's very first *Real World* house in New York City, most college freshmen were entering kindergarten. To this generation, reality television may not be considered new or exciting but rather common. Although they have lived with reality television, one question I plan to research is, what are college students watching?

So all of this brings me to the question; if American undergraduates ages 18-23 are watching reality television, why are they watching? More specifically, does gender have a connection with what reality shows they watch?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Thinking back to my college days, I remember the television acting as a bonding device throughout my residence hall. Freshmen year, my friends and I dropped everything to catch *Beverly Hills 90210* on Fox every Thursday night at 9pm. Whether we ordered Chinese food or bought a pint of ice cream, at least five girls sat in front of the thirteen inch television screen in complete silence for the hour. By senior year of college, we still bonded over the tube, but a new genre of television began to steal our attention. Sitcoms like *Friends* and *Will and Grace* were still popular, but it was the reality television that could not be missed. *The Real World*, *The Osbournes*, *The Bachelor* and *Survivor* were just a few of the shows that we began to schedule our days around.

Currently I am an employee in the Athletic Department of a University. In my office I have a staff of 20 student workers that I interact with on a daily basis. I often catch the buzz of conversations and have noticed that television is always a big topic among the students. More specifically, most of the shows being discussed are reality television programs. At times, the students act as if they have a personal connection with the characters they view on television. In mid-October, I sat down and interviewed four of my student employees. My goal was to receive and collect primary data to help finalize the content of my thesis. I know the reasons why I watch reality television, but I wanted to get into the mind of an average undergraduate student and receive basic feedback on why they watch reality television. I specifically chose two men

and two women to conduct this interview because my main objective is to decipher television habits based on gender. With the interviews I conducted, I was able to fine tune my research problem and come up with hypotheses.

One question I asked these four students during their interview was “How many hours of reality television do you watch per week?” Both of the male respondents answered two, while one female student said one and the other said three-four. This question allowed me to realize that all four of my interviewees were aware of reality television and watch it on a regular basis. A second question I asked was, “What is your favorite genre of television?” To this question, both females chose drama and both males chose sports. It was interesting to note that even though both genders enjoyed and watched reality television on a regular basis, neither gender found it to be their preferred genre of television. A third question, and the final one that I will reflect on, was, “What type of reality television show would you rank as your favorite?” To this question both males and one female responded competition-based and the other female responded, “Shows that are making people or situations better.” I would classify this as a self-improvement-based reality program. Overall through my interview process I found that based on my sample representative, both genders do watch reality television however, it is not their number one type of show currently on air. I also discovered that differences may exist on the preferred style of reality television due to ones gender.

Besides the curiosity of television habits and viewing patterns of typical American undergraduates, this interview led me to question if gender has any direct link to what people watch, or more specifically, what reality programs people watch. Do men and women have similar viewing patterns of television in general? Who watches more reality television? What type of show is appealing to each gender? Are networks capturing the same amount of attention

from both sexes? Is the reality television genre overdone with this generation? My goal through the course of this research is to answer all of these question that have come to my attention after talking to both male and female television viewers.

### **Research Question**

The purpose of this study is to take a deeper look at reality television in the United States and its correlation with the college campus. In particular, after conducting research and interviews, this is my research question. Why is U.S. based reality television viewed by female undergraduate students versus male undergraduate students? There are two main reasons why I chose to narrow this topic down to the undergraduate student level. First is because I work on a college campus and have access to this specific age group and second is because this age group has been immersed with the genre of reality from childhood until today. Even if they do not watch reality television on a regular basis, most should be aware of what it is and a few titles of programs that have aired.

### **Subsidiary Questions**

In order to fully understand my research question and to comprehend the impact of gender on the viewing patterns of college undergraduate students, I will devote time to answer the following questions:

1. How much reality television are undergraduate students watching?
2. Why do undergraduate college students like/dislike reality television?
3. What are the direct links between gender and reality television viewing habits?

## Hypotheses

When analyzing the gender television viewing habits of undergraduates students, I hypothesize that these next two statements will be proven true:

1. Female undergraduate students, ages 18-23, watch more U.S. based reality television than males.
2. Of the five types of reality television programs (documentary, lifestyle/makeover, competition, romance, and talent) I have discussed and will define further in my study, female undergraduate students, ages 18-23, prefer romance-based reality shows over the other four types. Male undergraduate students, on the other hand, prefer competitive based reality shows over the other four types.

## Limitations of the Study

One issue of the study is the fact that many reality television shows have overlapping styles. I have chosen to focus on five styles of reality television; documentary, lifestyle/makeover, competition, romance, and talent. Although I will be classifying shows into each style, a definite separation is not possible. For example, let's look at NBC's *The Biggest Loser*. On this show, fourteen contestants, seven men and seven women, are separated into two teams and each team is assigned a personal trainer. The goal of the show is to see which team and eventually which individual participant can lose the most weight during the season. The winner receives an award of \$250,000 and is named The Biggest Loser. On various reality television websites this show is categorized as a lifestyle changing program. I agree with this, but in addition, I would group this show as both documentary-based and competition-based styles. In addition to a new diet and exercise regime, these participants are living together in one

house twenty-four hours a day/seven days a week. The contestants have cameras capturing their every move and are learning to deal with the irregular situation they have been placed in.

Additionally, everyone is competing for the monetary prize that is awarded to the “Biggest Loser.” For this study, however, I will be limiting the shows to fit one classification based on the prominent feature or goal the producer is trying to accomplish.

A second limitation is that I will not be specifying an exact profile for the undergraduate students I use for my research. The differences between full-time and part-time undergraduates or a commuter and resident may change my study immensely. I will not be creating a breakdown to analyze these differences; rather I will focus on two simple criteria. First, the person must be enrolled at a United States university and second, the person must be between the ages of 18-23.

Lastly, I chose to limit my study to focus on male and female American undergraduate students rather than genders of all ages. Due to time constraints and the large volume of reality television shows currently being aired, I wanted a small target market to work with. Even though some of my analysis and results may reflect gender as a whole, this is not the intent of my study.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Culture** - The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning (p7).

**Drama** - a state, situation, or series of events involving interesting or intense conflict of forces.

**Gender** – The behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex.



**Generation Y** – is a term used in demographics to describe a generational cohort in western societies. The cohort comprises those born in the 1980s and 1990s although no consensus has emerged specifying exact dates. Many in Generation Y are the children of Baby Boomers, and the generation is also known as the "Echo (Boom) generation," because it is, in some areas, the largest demographic grouping since the baby boom of the late 1940s-early 1960s. **Genre** - The category a story or script falls into - such as: thriller, comedy, action, horror, drama, reality.

**Nielsen Ratings** – a ratings system that tracks television usage. These ratings are controlled by Nielsen Media Research, a service in the United States that utilizes an electronic measurement system called the Nielsen People Meter. These meters are placed in a sample of 5,100 households in the U.S., randomly selected and recruited by Nielsen Media Research. The People Meter is placed on each TV set in the sample household. The meter measures two things - what program or channel is being tuned and who is watching. The People Meter is used to collect audience estimates for broadcast and cable networks, nationally distributed syndicated programs and satellite distributors.

**Reality television** - a genre of television programming which generally is unscripted, documenting actual events over fiction, and featuring "ordinary" people over professional actors. Although the genre has been featured since early years of television, the current explosion of popularity began approximately in 2000. Critics of the genre have claimed that the term is a misnomer, as many reality TV shows put the participants in exotic locations and/or abnormal situations.

**Sitcom** - A humorous drama based on situations that might arise in day-to-day life, also termed a situation comedy.

## Conclusion

When first created the television was used primarily for communication purposes. Although this function is still a primary use, it acts as an entertainment and marketing tool. Reality television has been a help in pushing forward both of these characteristics. Ruocco (2002), in her thesis titled, *The Sociological and Psychological Impact of Reality-Based Television on the American Culture*, states “Television has defined every decade since its invention. In the new millennium, we now define our culture with a new genre of programming known as Reality TV” (p. 48). By the year 2005, I, along with many other television watchers, thought that reality television would be a memory. However, it is apparent that the opposite is true. With low production costs and high ratings, why would a broadcast network let this genre disappear? I think P.J. Levin (2005), correspondent for the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, was correct in his following statement, “There’s industry consensus that the reality genre will likely be a permanent fixture on America’s television screens” (p. 11).

The fact that reality television is predicted to stay around, is one of the main reasons why I chose this topic for my thesis. I want to get into the minds of the college viewers and find out exactly why they love or hate it. By surveying and comparing the male versus female perspective I hope to draw up conclusions that may be helpful for the major broadcast networks. Before getting that far ahead, let’s take a look at where television first began.

## Chapter 2: All about Television

### History of Television

Before diving into the main topic of reality television, I want to begin by recapping both the invention and progress of television itself. The television was not a simple creation by one individual. Rather, it has been many minds working both together and alone to bring about this widely used electronic device that some American's cannot live without. Let me highlight the main events that brought about this unforgettable invention. It all began on June 14, 1923, when Charles Jenkins made wireless television transmissions with a mechanical system from the Naval radio station in Anacostia to a Lab office in Washington D.C. In this same year, Vladimir Zworykin got a patent on the iconoscope cathode ray tube, a device or element that, at that time, was required in all television sets (Schoenherr, 2004). Two years later, Jenkins improved his transmissions and demonstrated a technique known as radio vision. He was able to move both picture and sound a distance of five miles to a group of government officials in Washington D.C. (Schoenherr, 2004). The first long distance use of television, from Washington D.C. to New York City, occurred on April 9, 1927, by Bell Telephone and the U.S. Department of Congress. The Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, made the following comment, "Today we have, in a sense the transmission of sight for the first time in the world's distance in a new respect, and in a manner hitherto unknown" (Bellis, n.d.).

Regular television broadcasting was started in May of 1928, and over the course of that year fifteen stations were licensed for television broadcasting. Also during that year, a three-inch screen set was created and sold for in house use (Schoenherr, 2004). By July of 1930, NBC started the very first television station in New York and named it W2XBS (Schoenherr, 2004).

By 1936, approximately two hundred television sets were in use across the globe and by the end of the decade, the Dumont Company started to make television sets (Bellis, n.d.).

The 1940s and 1950s brought about a number of changes and improvements to this electronic device. There were fewer than 7,000 working television sets in the United States and nine stations on air by 1945. The stations included three in New York, one in Chicago, one in Los Angeles, one in Philadelphia and one in Schenectady, NY. Cable television was introduced in Pennsylvania in 1948 and by this time one million homes in the country had television sets. In 1950 color televisions came about and were approved by the Federal Communications Commission. About six years later, Ampex introduced a videotape system. Also in this year, 1956, television watching was made simple when Robert Adler invented the remote control called the Zenith Space Commander (Bellis, n.d.).

In addition to the advancements being made to the actual television set, both television networks and actual programs to view on television were growing. In 1946, The Blue Network, that was part of NBC, branched off and became the home of the now popular ABC network. Also in June of this year NBC premiered the first “television sports extravaganza.” This was the Joe Louis versus Billy Conn heavyweight fight held in Yankees Stadium. The ratings showed that approximately 150,000 people watched from 5,000 television sets. A children’s audience was targeted in 1947 with the show “Howdy Doody” shown on NBC. The “Ed Sullivan Show” one of the longest-running shows in history had its debut in June of 1948. The sitcom genre came about in 1951 when “I Love Lucy” topped the charts across the nation in four of its’ first six seasons (High-Tech Productions, n.d.). Advertising was on the rise throughout the late 1940s and by 1952 the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters established guidelines called the Television Code in order to address concerns

voiced from social critiques. A majority of this code is addressing offensive or immoral actions in both television programs and advertisements. By 1954, television became the largest medium for national advertising and the Television Advertising Bureau was in its beginning stages.

During a typical week of television viewing in 1957, one would see 420 commercials, which is about five hours and eight minutes. The amount of money spent on ads for both television and radio reached the two billion mark by 1958 (High-Tech Productions, n.d.). Also in this year, there were 525 cable television systems serving 450,000 subscribers in the United States. A two page Ad that CBS placed in *TV Guide* stated, "Free television as we know it cannot survive alongside pay television" (High-Tech Productions, n.d., p. 8).

The 1960s proved to add more growth to the television boom. Television was stated to be the number one source for information above magazine and newspaper print combined. Historic events like Dr. Martin Luther's King's "I have a dream" speech and the assassination of JFK were all seen live on the tube. On a lighter note, the heart throb Beatles, had 73 million viewers when they performed live on the "Ed Sullivan Show." Other unforgettable television moments of this time were the introduction of "Sesame Street" one of the most influential children's television series and Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon, on July 20, 1969 (High-Tech Productions, n.d.).

From the year 1970 until today, the television set has been improving every single year. Here is a list of major events published by High-Tech Productions that have taken place over the last 35 years:

- "All in the Family" had its debut in 1971. This was "one of the first sitcoms to contain realistic characters, mature themes, and frank dialog."

- September 1975, Time Inc. initiatives launches Home Box Office, or what is commonly termed HBO.
- 1977, more than 75% of televisions at home are color.
- 1979, ESPN makes debut.
- November 1980, CBS show “Dallas” reveals Who Shot J.R. and had highest ratings ever.
- Cable News Network (CNN) and MTV: Music Television are born.
- 1983, MASH, sets highest viewing record for its final episode, 125 millions homes watched.
- Advertising as news is introduced by Apple’s advertisement during the 1984 Super Bowl for the Apple Computer.
- Animated sitcom called the “Simpsons” premiers in 1989.
- In the year 1993, 98% of U.S. household have one television set and 64% have two or more.
- 1994, over 95 million people watch the O.J. Simpson freeway chase.
- Digital Satellite dishes go on sale in 1996.
- 2000 is the year of the DVD or digital disk. By 2001 they are very popular in home entertainment.
- Today, DVD’s are outselling VHS. Now the most common types of televisions sold are LCD and Plasma screens

(High-Tech Productions, n.d.)

## **The Television Culture of the United States**

### *What the Ratings Say*

Through the years, America's love for television has developed from initial fascination to an accepted, and pervasive, part of life (Brooks & Marsh, 2003). Now that we have covered the invention and advancement of the television set, the next step is to uncover the television habits of American's as a whole. Although this research will focus directly on the college market, I first want to paint the overall picture. The main method used to track television ratings is through a company called the Nielsen Media Inc. This company is the leader in measuring the number of people watching television shows in the United States and Canada. The data that is collected is the most vital element for networks to determine advertising rates, schedule times, and program content ("Nielsen Ratings," n.d.). The television rating statistics are gathered in two ways, surveys and Nielsen boxes. For the first method surveys are distributed to television viewers in various demographics asking them to report on both the shows they are watching and the time these programs are on ("Nielsen Ratings," n.d.). The second method, which is more exact, asks 5,000 households to participate and have a small "black box" or computer hooked up to their television set at home. In order to find out what people are watching, meters installed track when the television sets are on and what channels they are tuned to. This "black box" gathers and sends all this information to the company's central computer every night where market researchers can study viewing habits on a minute by minute basis. One problem with the ratings technique is that viewers are aware of being a Nielsen representative sample, leaving room for bias ("Nielsen Ratings," n.d.). However, this research is worth billions of dollars and the data compiled is considered priceless to almost all major television networks.

According to the Nielsen Media Inc., the average American watches four hours of television each day. This adds up to 28 hours per week or two months of nonstop television watching per year. If this average person lives to be 65 years old, he or she will have spent approximately 9 years in front of the television (Herr, 2001). As of 2001, *The Sourcebook for Teaching Science* had developed the following television statistics:

- Percentage of households that possess at least one television: 99
- Number of TV sets in the average U.S. household: 2.24
- Percentage of U.S. home with three or more TV sets: 66
- Number of hours per day that TV is on in an average U.S. home: 6 hours 47 minutes
- Percentage of Americans that regularly watch television while eating dinner: 66
- Number of hours of TV watched annually by Americans: 250 billion
- Percentage of Americans who pay for cable TV: 56
- Percentage of Americans who say they watch too much TV: 49.

(Herr, 2001, p. 1)

When researching popular shows in the American television culture, the Nielsen ratings are the best place to turn to. Through the years, the trends of popular television programming have gone through a number of phases. “Each year, one program (or, in some cases, a tie) earns the highest average Nielsen rating for the corresponding television season. Table 2 below lists past record-holders:



Table 2

*TV Shows to Earn Highest Average Nielsen Ratings from 1950 – 2004*

Year	Television Show	Year	Television Show
1950-1951	Texaco Star Theater	1980-1982	Dallas
1951-1952	Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts	1982-1983	60 Minutes
1952-1955	I Love Lucy	1983-1984	Dallas
1955-1956	The \$64,000 Question	1984-1985	Dynasty
1956-1958	I Love Lucy	1985-1989	The Cosby Show
1958-1961	Gunsmoke	1989-1990	The Cosby Show and Roseanne (tie)
1961-1962	Wagon Train	1990-1991	Cheers
1962-1964	The Beverly Hillbillies	1991-1994	60 Minutes
1964-1967	Bonanza	1994-1995	Seinfeld
1967-1968	The Andy Griffith Show	1995-1997	ER
1968-1970	Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In	1997-1998	Seinfeld
1970-1971	Marcus Welby, M.D.	1998-1999	ER
1971-1976	All in the Family	1999-2000	Who Wants to Be a Millionaire
1976-1977	Happy Days	2000-2001	Survivor: The Australian Outback
1977-1979	Laverne and Shirley	2001-2002	Friends
1979-1980	60 Minutes	2002-2004	CSI

(“Nielsen Ratings,” n.d.)

As for today's hot television shows, here is a list of the number one prime-time television shows ranked by Nielsen. The following Table 3, extracted from Forbes.com website, includes the week of October 10 – 16, 2005 rankings with viewership for the week and season-to-date rankings:

Table 3

*Nielsen Ratings for week of October 10 – 16, 2005*

Television Show	Network	Weekly Ranking	Season-To-Day Ranking	# of Viewers
CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	CBS	1	1	28.3 Million
Desperate Housewives	ABC	2	2	25.8
Lost	ABC	3	4	21.7
Without a Trace	CBS	4	3	20.6
CSI: Miami	CBS	5	5	18.5
Grey's Anatomy	ABC	6	6	18.3
Survivor: Guatemala	CBS	7	9	17.8
NCIS	CBS	8	11	16.8
Commander in Chief	ABC	9	7	16.2
Extreme Makeover: Home Edition	ABC	10	16	16.1
NFL Monday Night Football	ABC	11	9	16.1
60 Minutes	CBS	12	19	15.5
Two and a Half Men	CBS	13	13	15.2
CSI: NY	CBS	14	14	15.2
Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	NBC	15	8	14.9
Cold Case	CBS	16	12	14.2
Criminal Minds	CBS	17	28	13.8
MLB AL Game 5	Fox	18	X	13.7
ER	NBC	19	15	13.6
Las Vegas	NBC	20	22	13.6

(Associated Press, 2005)

In addition to Nielsen ratings, I found the TV Guide as another helpful source for tracking the television movement of America. Prior to the Fall 2005 premier of new television shows, the Associate Press-TV Guide decided to conduct a study. Their purpose was to determine public attitudes on television programs before the kick off of a new line of fall television shows. This was a telephone interview conducted by Ipsos, an international polling firm that surveyed 1,002 U.S. adults. Below, Table 4 shows a copy of their survey questions and answers.

Table 4

*Results from AP-TV Guide Survey Conducted in fall of 2005*

1. Thinking about the types of programs on television, do you think there is too much, not enough, or about the right amount of each of the following?

	Too Much	Not Enough	About the Right Amount	Not Sure
<b>Crime Shows</b>	50%	6%	42%	2%
<b>Sitcoms</b>	28%	20%	49%	3%
<b>Reality TV Shows</b>	80%	4%	14%	2%
<b>Dramas</b>	18%	19%	61%	2%
<b>Talk Shows</b>	56%	3%	39%	2%
<b>News Programs</b>	22%	17%	60%	1%
<b>Games Shows</b>	29%	12%	56%	3%
<b>Sports</b>	25%	15%	60%	1%

2. In general, how truthful do you think reality shows are?

<b>As true as real life</b>	2%
<b>Mostly true, but they take some liberties</b>	14%
<b>They show some truth but are mostly distorted</b>	57%
<b>They are totally made up</b>	25%
<b>Not sure</b>	2%

3. How much does it matter whether reality shows are truthful?

<b>A lot</b>	30%
<b>A little</b>	24%
<b>Not at all</b>	44%
<b>Not sure</b>	2%

4. About how many hours a week on average would you say that you watch television?

<b>None</b>	2%
<b>1 – 5 Hours</b>	23%
<b>6 – 10 Hours</b>	28%
<b>11 – 20 Hours</b>	26%
<b>21 – 30 Hours</b>	13%
<b>30+ Hours</b>	8%

(Asked of those who said they watched television in question #4)

5. I'm going to read you a list of television shows that were first aired in the last television season, and I'm going to read the list twice. Please tell me again one of these shows you are most looking forward to seeing again in the new fall season. The shows are:

CSI: New York	22%
Desperate Housewives	13%
House	11%
Lost	11%
Grey's Anatomy	5%
Medium	5%
The Office	3%
Joey	3%
Other	4%
None of the above	10%
Not sure	13%

(“Results from AP-TV,” 2005)

By looking at both the Nielsen Ratings in Tables 2 and 3 and viewing the survey responses to the AP-TV Guide Survey in Table 4, it can be noted that CBS has done well with its program *Crime Scene Investigation or CSI*. Not only did this show have over 28 million viewers in the mid-October 2005 ratings, but according to the AP-TV Guide Poll, it is was the most anticipated show for the Fall 2005 season. Other general remarks from the above survey from AP-TV Guide were that majority of American’s watch 6 – 10 hours of television per week. Also when asked about specific television genres, those surveyed felt that talk shows, crime shoes and reality television may have too much of a presence on the tube. The main reason why I wanted to use this AP-TV Guide survey was because of its focus on reality television. It’s time to move away from the general television viewership habits and take a deeper look at reality television and it’s presence on American college campuses. First, however, we must discover where this genre of reality television began.

## Reality Television

### *History and Styles of Reality Television*

Karen Balkin (2004), in her book titled *Reality TV*, provides a quick overview of reality television:

“Present almost at the creation of television broadcasting in the late 1940s, reality TV has developed along with the medium and has changed as the nation changed. From the surprised Americans caught in their most embarrassing moments by Allen Funt’s *Candid Camera* in 1948, to the down-to-earth Loud family of *An American Family* in 1973, to the rat-eating competitors of *Survivor* in 2002, reality, or unscripted, TV has amused, surprised, and mortified millions of viewers through the years. The changes in program content reflect the changing times: What viewers want to know about the participants as well as what participants allow to be known about them has increased over the years” (p.9).

Reality television came to America from several other countries including Sweden, Japan, Australia, and England. This genre has been around for over fifty years, but for some reason is still seems so fresh and new. Television network CBS, can be credited for beginning this genre with its premier of *Candid Camera* in 1948. Post-World War II Americans, found the embarrassing component of this program to be very entertaining and uncomplicated. Every episode featured a new city, victim, and situation created by the producers. It was a good natured reality show, because as Funt said “[it] caught people in the act of being themselves.” (Balkin, 2004, p. 9).

From October 1955 through January 1956, Walter McGrew hosted a show called *Wanted*. On this program, stories of fugitives were told and then the host conducted live interviews with the family and law enforcement officers regarding the case first mentioned. It was this show that outlined the structure for Fox’s long running real live crime finders like *Cops* and *America’s Most Wanted*. *Cops*, which first aired in 1989 and is still running, features the true chase police officers around the U.S. often conduct when trying to stop crime. Whether it’s a highway chase,

drug bust, or the violent arrests – everything is aired. *America's Most Wanted*, on the other hand is more similar to *Wanted*. This show featured host John Walsh, and gave actual reenactments of crimes, sketching of the criminal, and information on what to do if this person should be found. The purpose of the show was to replay the exact situation and provide as much information as possible in trying to crack cases that went unfinished (Rowan, n.d.).

In 1970's, according to Balkin, American's were becoming more independent and this placed a change on their taste in television. She claims that, "By the early 1970's viewers who were used to watching Vietnam War footage on the six o'clock news as they ate dinner were ready for more from television – more reality, more invasiveness" (Balkin, 2004, p. 9). In 1973, a PBS documentary-based reality television show called *An American Family* was created by a company called Video VertiY. This show, produced by Craig Gilbert, depicted the life of an "ordinary" family; their names were Bill, Pat, and Lance Loud. By ordinary, they fit the description of most PBS-watching families, white, middle class, and educated. PBS brought film crews into the Loud house for seven months, which added up to three hundred hours, of live filming. During this time American's were entertained and shocked to observe the son Lance admits that he was gay and the Loud parents struggle through a divorce. In the end, twelve of these hours were chosen to be broadcasted and the reality world hit a high of 10 million viewers (Rowan, n.d.). According to Jeffery Rouff, a media scholar at Dartmouth University, "*An American Family* is widely recognized as the mother of all reality TV shows" (Balkin, 2004, p. 10).

Some say that it was *An American Family* that inspired an MTV program called *The Real World* that premiered in 1992. This show exemplified a balance of a documentary, soap opera, drama, and cinema, all combined into one (Miller, 2000). The creators of this documentary-

based reality show, Mary-Ellis Bunim and Jonathon Murray, came from two very different worlds. Murray was a journalist working for local news programs all over the country, while Bunim was an executive producer of soap operas. Together they chose to put six young twenty-something's in a big city house and record their interactions, more specifically focusing on their conflicts. At the last minute before filming, they changed the number of housemates from six to seven, because they could not choose between two finalists. An article in *Social Policy* magazine confirmed that:

“MTV did not radically change the form of this genre, but adapted it to a particular audience that had come to expect a certain style of programming, introducing quick edits and rock soundtracks, and focused on how the inhabitants of the house, leaving their families, formed new bonds and affinities in a made-for-TV environment” (Miller, 2000, p.8).

After the Boston series, in 1997, Murray and Bunim decided to ban television and radio from the Real World houses because it made the show too boring. Currently, *The Real World* is MTV's longest running series and has showed over 200 episodes in 13 years. Back in 2001, an average episode was drawing more than 2.2 million viewers, which is triple the ratings they had when the show was first aired (Peyser, 2001). In 2004, *The Real World* filmed in San Diego was the topped ranked series among viewers ages 12 to 34. Nielsen Media Inc. recorded an average of 3.7 million viewers per episode. Although their numbers dropped slightly in 2005, when the show filmed in Philadelphia, each episode averaged 3 million viewers (Atkinson, 2005). This show was the true pioneer of reality television as we see it today.

According to Robert Thompson, director of the Center for the Study of Popular Television at Syracuse University:

“Reality TV in the twenty-first century represents a new way of telling a story which [is] half fiction – the producers and creators set up a universe, they give it rules, they make a setting, they cast it according to specific guidelines as to who they think are going to provide a good pyrotechnics. But then they bring in non-actors with no scripts and allow this kind of improvisation like a jazz piece to occur (Balkin, 2004, p. 10).

Over the past few years viewers have been glued to the television set watching participants fight with one another, struggle with the environment, reveal their inner secrets, and eat disgusting dishes like bugs and cow brains. Reality television had made another transition to a contest in which people are competing against one another in order to win love or money (Balkin, 2004).

This new trend of competition-based reality television reached its peak in 2000 when Mark Burnett, pitched the idea of *Survivor* to CBS. The show selected 16 contestants, or castaways, to pack up and bring nothing but themselves to a desert island. The contestants are split into two teams or tribes and each member is competing to be the last standing, or the sole Survivor, and will win one million dollars. Throughout the show contestants are eliminated through tribal councils. Immunity may be won with various competitions that are performed throughout the day. Edward Miller (2000), author for *Social Policy* claims that Burnett may have made the following pitch to CBS, “Survivor is one part *Gilligan’s Island*, one part *Lord of the Flies*, and one part *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*” (p.6). The season finale of *Survivor I* attracted over fifty million viewers in America. It’s safe to say that Burnett choose the right ingredients for successful reality programming. Other competition-based reality shows that were introduced by networks following Burnett’s hit include: *The Mole*, *Fear Factor*, and *Amazing Race*.



Romance-based reality television made its first premier on March 25, 2002, with ABC's *The Bachelor*. The premise behind this show was to select one single man looking to fall in love and offer him twenty-five women also searching for a life mate. Alex Michel, a management consultant, was ABC's first Bachelor. Each week, viewers tuned in as Michael presented uttered the words, "Will you accept this rose?" When asked this question, the female participants were given the option to either remain on the show and continue dating Alex, or call it quits and go home. By the show's finale on April 25, 2002, Alex chose and proposed on national television to Amanda Marsh. The overall ratings, according to Nielsen Media Research, for this show had grown 83% from a score of 4.0 on the first episode to a 7.3 for the last. Overall, *The Bachelor* season one was ranked number 27 among the ABC network, the only shows that beat its ratings were *Monday Night Football* and *The Practice* (Lisotta, 2005).

After running for almost four years and 9 seasons, ABC is evaluating the future of *The Bachelor* (which includes both *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*). Table 5 below illustrates the adult ratings for *The Bachelor* seasons that I was able to find according to Nielsen Media Research. As you can tell by glancing at this table, the first three seasons of *The Bachelor* had continuous growth in numbers, with the average ranking climbing from No. 27 to 13. The network reached a peak, ranked No. 10, when it decided to change gears in January of 2003 with Trista Rehn premiering as *The Bachelorette*. However, when *The Bachelor* Seasons four and five aired, ratings started to slip. Andrea Wong, ABC's executive VP of alternative programming, specials, and late night, blames the drop in ratings on the fact that the show was not designed to be shown three times a year. She claims, "While *The Bachelor* has earned its network stripes, it's questionable whether the franchise can continue to sustain three installments a year. Ms. Wong said she does not know whether the show will continue with the same

scheduling” (Lisotta, 2005, p.10). Wong is a firm believer that despite the dropping numbers, this reality can continue to do well for ABC especially because of its competitive ratings for the demographic of women ages 18 to 34. John Rash, senior VP and director of broadcast operations for Campbell Mithum, advised that, “instead of making the show a fall-to-spring staple of the schedule, ABC could use the franchise in a more targeted way” (Lisotta, 2005, p.11). A few options that have been considered are airing on a new night and time, linking the show with a highly ranked lean-in program, premiering in the summer rather than fall or spring, or filming in a different country, I saw an advertisement for *The Bachelor* in Paris on the ABC website. It will be interesting to see whether or not this long-lasting romance-based reality program will be able to stay alive.

Table 5

*Nielsen Ratings for The Bachelor and The Bachelorette*

<b>The Bachelor</b>	<b>Average Ranking</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
Season I, Spring 2002 Bachelor: Alex Michel	# 27	4.6
Season II, Fall 2002 Bachelor: Aaron Buerge and Season III, Spring 2003 Bachelor: Andrew Firestone	# 13	6.9
Season IV, Fall 2003 Bachelor: Bob Guiney and Season V, Spring 2004 Bachelor: Jesse Palmer	# 15	5.8
Season VI, Fall 2004 Bachelor: Byron Velvick and Season VII, Spring 2004 Bachelor: Charlie O'Connell	No Ratings Found	No Ratings Found
<b>The Bachelorette</b>	<b>Average Ranking</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
Season I, Winter 2003 Bachelorette: Trista Rehn	#10	7.8
Season II, Winter 2004 Bachelorette : Meredith Phillips	#22	5.2
Season III, Winter 2005 Bachelorette: Jen Schefft	#41	3.9

The two final styles of reality television I want to expand on are talent-based and lifestyle/makeover-based. In the talent-based segment, one of the most dominating shows is Fox's *American Idol*. For the upcoming fifth season, show producers and judges went to the following seven cities: San Francisco, Austin, Boston, Greensboro, Denver, Chicago, and Las Vegas. In each city thousands of singers lined up to have their one chance at becoming the next "American Idol." Singing talent from around the nation is showcased and viewers are then asked to call or text in what singer they think was the best. With a mix of talent, competition, and viewer interaction, the ratings for this program have been consistent in all four seasons. The two hour debut of *American Idol 4*, delivered the highest rated entertainment broadcast for the 2004-2005 television season (Rogers, 2005). Rogers's (2005) also commented:

While CBS's Sunday night NFL American Football Conference title game broadcast managed to sneak in and bump *American Idol* out of its perch at the top of the weekly Nielsen ratings for the week ending January 23, Tuesday's *Idol* debut still managed to draw 33.6 million viewers and a 14.0/33 rating/share in adults 18-49 demographic (p. 1).

The newest trend of reality television conveniently falls into my final category of research for this study which is makeover/lifestyle-based. These inspirational shows, such as *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and *The Biggest Loser*, have been growing in popularity. *The Biggest Loser*, which I explained and discussed in chapter 1, has been a surprise hit for the NBC network. A combined formula of exercise, diet, and mental toughness is utilized in trying to help 16 contestants achieve their weight loss goals. Even though the show ends with only one winner, or should I say one, "Loser," everyone involved goes through a positive lifestyle change. *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, is ABC's prime example of this makeover/lifestyle-based

reality genre. On this show, one needy family per week is chosen to have their home completely remodeled for no cost. A design team, hundred's of workmen and workwomen, and sometimes even the neighbors, all join forces to completely renovate both the interior and exterior of a house in only seven days. As of October 2004, the show was drawing about 15 million total viewers and was ranked in Nielsen's top 20 (Paulsen, 2004). Both NBC and ABC have discovered a way of capturing their audience while helping ordinary people make lifestyle changes that they never saw possible.

Reality television has been in existence for over 57 years and, I am confident, that it will continue to air for a very long time. The above has been a recap of the major highlights that this genre has offered to television viewers across the nation. Finally, too simplify my research, Table 6 below provides a breakdown of all of the reality television genres, I have just discussed, and examples of current shows that can be categorized into each genre.

Table 6

*Genres and Examples of Reality Television*


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Reality TV Genres	Current Shows Among Genre
Documentary-Based	<i>The Real World</i> <i>Road Rules</i> <i>Laguna Beach</i> <i>Sorority/Fraternity Life</i>
Competition-Based	<i>Survivor</i> <i>The Amazing Race</i> <i>The Mole</i> <i>Fear Factor</i>
Romance-Based	<i>The Bachelor and The Bachelorette</i> <i>Joe Millionaire</i> <i>For Love or Money</i>
Makeover/Lifestyle-Based	<i>Extreme Makeover: Home Edition</i> <i>MTV's Made</i> <i>Wife Swap</i> <i>The Biggest Loser</i>
Talent-Based	<i>American Idol</i> <i>Last Comic Standing</i> <i>The Apprentice</i> <i>The Contender</i>

*Why the Networks Love Reality TV*

There are several reasons why networks choose to develop and air reality shows, but the number one reason is because it makes them profitable. On the other side, some argue that reality programming was largely a result of trying to avoid high costs and economic pressures, a way to avoid losing money. When television introduced cable, VCR's, the FOX network, and local independent stations, the revenue per-show began to decrease. At this point, reality television became more appealing because this genre did not require expensive, professional, and unionized acting talent. Rather than paying for actors, participants line up in thousands for a

chance to become a star on a reality program, and in fact, work for free. There is no need to pay professional writers because reality shows are not scripted. Costs were also cut by using small handheld cameras and not much extra lighting (Hill & Quin, 2003). Let's look at this quick figure from Balkin (2004), "It costs about \$750,000 per episode to produce a reality TV show; popular sitcoms can run up to \$3 million." (p. 11).

Ellen Sandler, a sitcom writer for both "Everybody Loves Raymond" and "Coach" attests that one of the reasons why reality television is everywhere is because of its cheaper production costs than sitcoms. Even if a reality show does not run as well in syndication in comparison to a sitcom, the difference in initial production costs still make it worth while to create (Levine, 2005). Besides the monetary value a company may save, reality television can also keep your air fresh. Networks are able to expand and go outside the box for a reasonable price. It is both a money maker and a fascinating aspect of the American entertainment culture (Balkin 2004).

According to Rino Scanzoni, president of national broadcast at WPP Group's Mediaedge:cia, New York, not many scripted television shows have a profitable return on investment on their original premier. Due to the high costs of licensing fees, most programs do not pay out until put into syndication. Networks need to take this into consideration when choosing between running a scripted series for a second time or attempting to introduce a new reality show. Even though reality shows are cheaper, they are not free. If the reality show is introduced and the viewership is low, the network will lose. "Many clients are just looking to find the next 'Joe Millionaire,' so they will take a leap of faith with a new reality programs in lieu of a repeat," said Ray Dundas, senior VP, for Initiative in New York. "Other clients are happy with a repeat of *Frasier*" (Ryan, 2003, p.36). Simply stated, reality television works and

networks plan to keep airing and creating new programs for this genre. It is not only the networks that enjoy reality television, but America has become a huge fan as well.

### *Why America Loves Reality Television*

There are many different viewpoints on why America loves reality television. Carrie Adams (2005) journalist for *University of Chicago Press Journals*, reports:

Research in the September 2005 issue of the *Journal of Consumer Research* suggests that viewers desire to blend fact with fantasy in order to create a complexly constructed experience. Randall Rose and Stacy Wood (University of South Carolina), coin this phenomenon “hyperauthenticity.” This blending of the real and fantasy is the difference between simply watching “real” programming like CSPAN and engaging and interacting with a program such as *Survivor* (p. 1).

Their study continues to say that viewers have a different experience when watching reality television versus other television programs. “Viewers are stimulated when watching these shows due to the fact that the actors are seen as peers and their actions are compared to the viewer’s own” (Adams, 2005, p.1).

This is not the only opinion that has been formed on why reality television has become so popular. Steven Weiss, a professor at Ohio State University, and doctorate student James Wiltz, published an article in *Psychology Today* titled “Why America Loves Reality TV.” When gathering information to answer this question they conducted a detailed survey asking questions about both television viewing habits and general values and desires, through the Reiss Profile – a standardized test of 16 basic desires and values (Balkin, 2004). According to this study, the main reason American’s tune into reality television was due to a desire for status. Balkin (2004)

reported, "Fans of the show are much more likely to agree with statements such as, 'Prestige is important to me' and 'I am impressed with designer clothes,' than are other people" (p. 26).

Reality television is one way in which people might fantasize about becoming famous. When watching these programs, they witness ordinary people, like themselves, gaining fame by being on television. A few of these participants even go on, after their time on the reality program is ended, to become actors/actresses, talk show hosts, movie stars, etc. Balkin (2004) continued on her point by saying, "The message of reality television is that ordinary people can become so important that millions will watch them. And the secret thrill of many of those viewers is the thought that perhaps next time, the new celebrities may be them" (p. 27).

Yet another study by a group of Communication Students at the University of Arizona, had a different opinion of why America loves to watch reality television. These students surveyed 252 Tucson, Arizona residents on the following topics: their overall television viewing patterns, their exposure to reality-based television programs, and their assessments of a particular reality-based program to which they had been exposed as either a regular or casual viewer. Their results found that regular viewers of reality television watch for two reasons: they find the shows entertaining and because they enjoy getting a peak into others' lives. On the opposite side, regular viewers were not watching because they are bored, need to escape, to gain useful information, or for the social utility these shows provide. (Nabi, Biely, Morgan & Stitt, 2003). This study did not assess the desire for fame that Balkin earlier claimed as a reason for reality television's popularity.



*Reality Television Today – Will It Stay or Will It Go?*

The television industry has conceded that reality television is likely to be a permanent fixture on American television screens (Levine, 2005). Although many people seem to believe it is on its way out, according to ratings and studies the opposite is true. Magna Global research showed that from October, 2003 to March, 2004, reality television comprised 19% of the broadcast network's prime time schedule. This number had jumped 5% from the 2002-2003 study and was 14% higher than the reality time aired in 2001-2002 (Atkinson, 2004).

An opposing view declares that reality television was introduced just as networks were in a dry spell. In October, 2005, *The New York Times* stated the following: "Reality television has generated some of the biggest, most talked-about hits for broadcast networks in the last five years. But as a new television season begins, some industry executives are looking at the early ratings returns and whispering a question: Is the reality boom over? Or at least in decline?" (Carter, p. C.1). We have discussed the growth of reality television, but if we look at today, has it reached its peak? There are many shows that once stood out, that have lost popularity as of the fall. The most apparent program is Donald Trump's, *The Apprentice*, which the ratings have dropped 40% from Season 2 to Season 3 (Carter, 2005). The question remains, is reality television just a void in networks that needed to be filled or is it a genre that will last for many generations to come?

**Television habits of American College Students***The Ratings, or lack of Ratings*

Television viewing habits and ratings of the college demographic is very hard to reach and so little understood. According to ESPN, there are approximately 4.8 million college

viewers that go uncounted per week in national ratings (Vogt, 2002). Back in September of 2002, ESPN wanted to correct this problem and conducted research to determine more accurate television ratings by including out-of-home locations such as college campuses. The ESPN college TV viewing study found that the average college student spends 14.5 hours a week in front of the television. College students, despite their hectic schedules, typically watch television in groups or rush to the television for, what Chang termed as, “appointment television” (2002). A major problem with television ratings is that college campuses, along with bars, hotels, prisons, offices and military housing are venues that Nielsen has not monitored on a regular basis due to high costs and technology issues (Barnes, 2005). According to Chang (2002), “Because college students in group-living environments are never surveyed by Nielsen, this entire demographic, mostly ages 18 to 24, is excluded from the ratings numbers which essentially determine on-air programming, perhaps even sending some shows to an early funeral” (p. 1).

Nielsen Media Inc. is in the process of trying to develop gadgets that may work in capturing the ratings from these out-of-home locations that have a big impact on overall televising ratings. In *Wall Street Journal* article, Brooks Barnes (2005) commented that, “Viacom, Inc., owner of MTV Networks, Time Warner Inc. and Fox commissioned the study in hopes of nudging Nielsen into regularly measuring TV viewing in college dormitories and residences” (p. B.1 ). In an ABC News article, David Bauder (2005) added, “TV networks are eager to see this information. Young people, particularly young men, represent a demographic for which some advertisers will pay a premium, and Nielsen’s data can prove whether a show draws the audience” (p. 1). Although Nielsen does track television habits of college men and women, this is only when they are living at home. Additionally, only 15% of college students that are living at home are represented in these Nielsen ratings (Vogt, 2002). At home, most

people either watch television alone or with one other person. However, in a college setting, things are very different. Most times, students are watching in a group setting with roommates and friends, meaning there may have to be compromises made on what programs to tune into. In 2003, Nielsen Media Research Inc. made an attempt to extend its television rating service to the college campus. By March of 2005 results of this two-year study were released and resulted in “significant” outcomes that impacted ratings in the 18 -34 age demographic.

The above mentioned study revealed that college students watch, on average, three hours and forty-one minutes of television each day. In comparison to the average American, this is approximately one hour less per day. As for weekly totals, the average American watches 32 hours while a college student, according to Nielsen Media Inc, views only 14.5 hours per week. Some reasons for the limited television viewing may be due to heavy work schedules and class commitments (Gordon, 2002). More specific data found from this study shows that college viewership was at its highest in September and reached a low in December. For television watching in general, Nielsen ratings have often seen an increase in watching during the colder months, however on a college setting December is a typical month for studying for exams in the library and heading home for the holiday break (Bauder, 2005).

In October of 2002, 175 males and 175 female students from George Washington University were polled for an article in the school newspaper regarding their television viewing habits. The results of this study showed very different results than both the ESPN and Nielsen tests. Approximately 70% of GW Students watched less than 6 hours of television per week the other 30% watched between 6 and 20 hours. There were only a handful of students that said they watched more than 20 hours (Gordon, 2002). Even though only represents 350 college students,

it's interesting to note that when broken down, majority of the students were watching less than one hour of television per day.

To add to all of this previous research, in October, 2005, I did my own preliminary study by talking directly with a few college students. I interviewed four active college students, two males and two females, and asked questions about their general television viewing habits and more specifically questions about their reality television viewing habits. One question I asked was, "How much television do you watch per week?" Of the four students I questioned, the responses were 12-15 hours, 21 hours, 6 hours and 3 hours. My average of less than 11 hours per week was higher than the GW study but lower than both ESPN and Nielsen studies. Artie Bulgrin, ESPN senior vice president for research and sales development, made the following interpretation on why college students watch less television than the norm, "College students are active and not necessarily watching a lot of television. They're harder to reach" (Vogt, 2002, p. 2).

### *What are College Students Watching?*

Now that we are aware of how much television college students are watching, I want to dive into the research I found regarding what college students are watching. First off, it must be noted that individuals enrolled in college today are products of the cable era. According to researcher Heidi Vogt (2002), "College students watch a lot more ad-supported cable than measured households, with some 54% of their viewing dedicated to cable. Another 3% of their time goes to premium cable channels" (p. 1). This study continues to state that of the cable networks, MTV is the most watched, followed by ESPN, TBS, The Learning Channel and Comedy Central (Vogt, 2002). Nielsen Media Inc. studies justify Vogt's above comment. Their

study found that college students watch almost twice as much cable than broadcast television (Bauder, 2005).

Curt King, the vice president for publicity at NBC, realizes the importance that the college market has on the television industry. King (2002) said that “viewers ‘love funny, funny comedies’ and programs that are ‘very smart and quickwitted’” (Gordon, 2002, p. 2). He added that “Other factors that attract student viewers include plot, sex, good-looking actors, and celebrity casts” (Gordon, 2002, p. 2). Overall, the two highest rated shows in 2002 on NBC were *Friends* and *ER* (Gordon, 2002). Taking a closer look at male and female genders separately, college males watched the most amount of television during late-night hours. It was noted, more recently, in Bauder’s study for the *Associate Press*, that:

For college men, the 10 most-watched programs last October were all baseball games, primarily postseason games involving the Boston Red Sox as the team marched to its first World Series Championship in 86 years. For college women, their favorite show in October was NBC’s *Joey*. The women also liked ABC’s short lived *Life as We Know It*, set in a high school (2005, p. 1).

The results of the poll conducted at GW University claimed that sitcoms out won all other genres of television with approximately 50% of students watching them most. About 20% of female GW students preferred reality or dating programs while 20% of males choose sports programs. Table 7 below provides an even better breakdown of the programs males and females favored at GW University.

Table 7

*Survey Results for most Frequently Watched TV Shows at George Washington University*

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Males		Females	
<i>The Simpsons</i>	30%	<i>Friends</i>	35%
<i>The West Wing</i>	18%	<i>Sex and the City</i>	27%
<i>The Sopranos</i>	17%	<i>The Real World</i>	10%

(Gordon, 2002)

During the validation interviews that I completed, besides how much television students watched, I also asked, "What is your favorite genre of television?" The responses were: Drama and sitcoms, drama, sports and sitcoms, and sports. Two students, both female, selected drama among their favorite genre and the other two students, both male, chose sports. Obviously, since I only interviewed four students, my answers may not mirror that of entire college surveys and/or nation wide ratings that have been conducted. However, when I ask these same questions to over a few hundred students during my survey process, I hope to develop significant results.

#### *Reality Television on Campus*

Earlier I provided you with data and research on why America loves reality television. Although there is not an abundance of information, I want to present you with my findings on American college students and their relationship with reality television. I will once again focus on both the George Washington University survey and my validation interviews.

Almost 30% of the GW students stated that reality television programs are still popular and 40% even stated that if asked they would participate in one (Gordon, 2002). This article also stated that, "Some experts said students enjoy watching reality programming because their lives

don't seem as troubled compared to those on the programs" (Gordon, 2002, p. 3). On the opposite end, there were students who were very skeptical of reality television. Ben Glasgall, a sophomore said, "(Reality shows) don't represent real life. People wouldn't do what they do on the shows (in real life). I'd never go on one" (Gordon, 2002, p. 2). Junior, Jason Moussourakis was in agreement with Glasgall's thought. He said, "Shows like MTV's *Sorority Life* shows students running around like chickens with their heads cut off while drinking, and this reflects negatively on college students" (Gordon, 2002, p. 2).

During my interview process, I asked seven questions regarding reality television. Of these questions, I want to share the results of two of them with you. The first question was, "How many hours of reality television do you watch per week?" The responses to this question were 1 hour, 2 hours, 3-4 hours, and 2 hours. All four of the interviewees were familiar with reality television and watched reality television on a regular basis. When comparing this number to the overall hours of television these students watched per week, it was interesting to see that even if a student spent more time watching television, this did not necessarily mean he or she was watching more reality television. For example, I had one student that watched 21 hours of television a week, yet not even 10% (2 hours) of reality television. A second student only watched 6 hours of television a week, but over 50% (3 -4 hours) was spent watching reality television.

The second question I asked in reference to reality television was, "Why do you watch reality television?" The four answers were:

1. "I don't know, usually I am bored and that is a good form of entertainment."

2. "Because it is new, it's always something new and different. Since, to a point, it is not scripted, you never know what the outcome will be."
3. "I watch for the drama, I like to see other people in 'real life' situations and how they deal with it. I also watch shows where people are helping each other; it's nice to see a girl or boy fulfill a dream or a family that is struggling to get a brand new house."
4. "Cause there is nothing else on."

Majority of the students agreed that reality television helps to fill a void and provides on the spot entertainment. The response number 3 was very similar what the analysis from GW University. Students search for answers to their own everyday problems by turning to the 'real life' situations they see broadcasted with reality television. I plan to broaden the knowledge of reality television and its impact on the American college campus once I develop, distribute, and analyze my own survey.

## **Conclusion**

Not only has television come a long way, but reality television programs have also created a small history for themselves. In a communications thesis on reality television that I reviewed the author claimed, "Television has defined every decade since its invention. In the new millennium, we now define our culture with a new genre of programming known as Reality TV" (Ruocco, 2004, p. 48). There have been numerous styles of reality television, but my focus is on documentary, competition, romance, lifestyle/makeover, and talent-based. Over the past decade the ratings for all of these programs have had their ups and downs, but it is still too early to determine whether or not this genre will be a permanent fixture on our television sets. Many



experts have looked into the reasons why American's watch this style of show, and now my goal is to further research and discover why American college students tune in.

### Chapter 3: Method and Design

As previously mentioned in this research, it appears that networks or ratings companies have not done extensive research on television viewing habits of college students. In particular, I was unable to find specific patterns of American college students and reality television viewership based on gender. The college market has a huge impact on television, data from a Nielsen Media Inc. has even made claims that college students are watching a lot more television than previously thought (Greppi, 2005). With that being said, this is a description of both my methodology and design set up to answer my research question.

The design of my research is as follows. The first step, which I have completed, was to conduct four validation interviews. I selected two undergraduate women and two college undergraduate men at random from a college campus. I asked each participant nine questions regarding general and reality television viewing habits. The purpose of these interviews was to clarify the context of my research problem. I wanted to make sure that I was working with a topic that was both researchable and popular among this demographic. For a list of the questions asked look at Appendix A.

The second step of my research design is to create and distribute a survey. My goal is to gain meaningful data and insight from a small, target audience that will act as a representative of the entire U.S. college community. I selected to do a survey as my primary source for data for many reasons. It is convenient and it will leave with me both broad and objective results. Additionally, I chose a survey because of the accessibility I have to the demographic of college students ages 18 – 23. I am currently an employee at a University and have access to a high volume of college students both in person and with the Internet. A survey will allow me to ask a

lot of questions in a short amount of time to a large number of participants. This is the most efficient method for me to use for data collection.

The candidates for both my interviews and surveys will fulfill this profile:

- Born in the United States and currently living in the United States.
- At least 18 years old.
- At most 23 years old.
- Enrolled in a United States College or University.

Potential respondents to my survey will be found through the use of global online survey software called Zoomerang. Once my survey has been customized, my plan is to use Zoomerang to assist in both finding participants and tabulating results. Additionally, I plan to use my own e-mail database to reach out to friends, family, co-workers, and students at my place of employment to send this survey to people that fit the above profile. Interviewees will be selected at random from students I interact with at work on a daily basis.

I plan to be testing the survey in late December 2005 and to launch the final draft in the first week of January, 2006. The survey will run for approximately four weeks, so I plan remove it from the Zoomerang website in the first week of February, 2006. At this time, I hope to have 150 completed surveys, 75 from female respondents and 75 from male respondents. Partial surveys will not be accepted. Since the topic revolves around television, I am anticipating a response rate of 60 – 70%. The survey consists of fourteen questions in total. The first three questions cover basic demographics; gender, age, and current year of college education. The following five questions focus on general television viewing habits and then, more specifically, reality television awareness and viewing habits. The final section of the survey utilizes a power rating scale. On this scale, a score of five is the highest or claims “Yes, this is the absolute

reason why I watch.” On the opposite end of the scale, a score of one is the lowest or claims “No, this is the absolute reason why I do not watch.” This survey should take five minutes, at most, to complete and is very simple for college students to comprehend.

Once I have attained my survey goal, the next steps are to code, analyze, and report the findings. Through the use of Zoomerang software, if utilized properly, all of my survey results will be tabulated right on the website. I will have graph charts and percentages for each question asked that I can analyze and make generalizations with. From this test I plan to take an in depth look at the viewing patterns of reality television for college students, based on gender. I plan to separate the male answers from the female in order to do direct comparisons for each topic questioned. Once my results are coded and analyzed, I will go back and review my research question, hypotheses, and subsidiary questions to determine whether or not my original expectations came true. Finally, I will begin to conduct a final analysis and to report my findings in Chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis. With the use of pre-interviews and a survey, I hope to attain the overall viewing habits that American college students have towards reality television.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis of Survey**

### **Review of the Research Problem**

In the first chapter of this thesis I provided a thorough discussion of the purpose of this study. Before providing the analysis of my survey, I want to give a quick review of this purpose and the research question I have proposed. The purpose of this study is to take a deeper look at reality television in the United States and its correlation with the college campus. In particular, after conducting both surveys and interviews, this is my original research question. Why is U.S. based reality television viewed by female undergraduate students versus male undergraduate students? The 14 question survey was tailored in a way that would most effectively answer the above question.

### **Survey Methodology**

In December of 2005 I drafted a 14 question survey to be distributed to U.S. College students between the ages of 18 and 23. I created my survey and then used an online program called Zoomerang to assist with distributing and tracking results. This program developed a web link that made taking my survey very simple. All I had to do was e-mail students this web link, and when they clicked on it, it took them directly to my survey on the Zoomerang website. I did a test run of the web link and survey in the end of December and launched the official survey on January 24, 2006. Since I am employee at a U.S. University, I was able to obtain an e-mail list of more than five-thousand students. I selected 200 males and 200 females at random and e-mailed them the web link. Additionally, I e-mailed this link to any family and friends that fulfilled the requirements for the target market.



After just one day of my survey launch, I already had surveys completed by 75 students. The one problem I noticed, however, was that 52 of these surveys were completed by females and only 23 by males. Upon recognizing that the female response was a lot higher and faster than the males' response, I went back to my college e-mail list and sent the survey to another 200 males chosen at random. I monitored the Zoomerang sight every few hours and the completed number of surveys continued to increase. By January 26, two days after the launch I was closely approaching my goal to complete 150 surveys and had almost attained an even number of male to female ratio. I kept a close watch on the survey throughout the day, and by the evening I was able to close the survey when the male response rate was even with the female.

The survey was completed by 156 American College students, 78 male and 78 female. My participation rate was low, at approximately 40%, but this may be because I closed the survey in under three days. Either the students did not check their e-mail or simply did not have a chance to read and take the survey. The low participation rate did not bother me since I obtained my goal in a much faster rate than was anticipated.

## Survey Analysis





The first step of my analysis is to look at the big picture. Below I have provided a breakdown of every question and response from the survey. Let's see what both men and women of this demographic had to say.

### Question #1: What is your gender?

Gender		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Male		78	50%
Female		78	50%
<b>Total</b>		156	100%

After sending out the survey through Zoomerang, I tracked it daily. I kept a close watch on both the total number of respondents and the number from each gender. My goal was to have the survey completed by 75 males and 75 females. I exceeded this goal with a total of 156 respondents, 78 males and 78 females.

**Question #2: What year of college are you currently enrolled in?**

Enrollment Year		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Freshmen		41	27%
Sophomore		40	26%
Junior		42	27%
Senior		33	20%
<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>








**Question #3: How old are you?**

Age	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
18	29	19%
19	39	25%
20	44	28%
21	26	17%
22	12	8%
23	4	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>








Questions 3 and 4 were asked with the intention of discovering both the age and school year of every individual involved with my research. Overall, I am pleased to have a good distribution of respondents from every class and age group. The demographic with the lowest response level is college seniors who make up 20% of all the respondents. The typical age range of college seniors is 21-23, which make up 28% of all responses. Keep in mind however, that some 21 year olds are only juniors so the actual percentage based on age is lower. In general, U.S. college students of all ages and class levels are represented in the following survey results.

**Question #4: On average, how many hours of television do you watch per week?**

Hours		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
0 – 3		42	27%
4 – 6		45	29%
7 – 10		23	15%
11 – 14		21	14%
15 – 18		9	6%
19 – 21		8	5%
22 or more		8	5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>


Based on the survey, a majority of college students, or 66%, watch between zero and six hours of television per week. Although the number of responses decreased as the hours watched increased, it should be noted that 10% of all respondents watch at least nineteen hours of television per week. According to the 2002 ESPN study I mentioned in chapter 2, the average college student spends 14.5 hours a week in front of the television. After tallying my survey results, I was surprised when my results showed a much lower average.

**Question #5: What is your favorite genre, or style, of television?**

Genre/Style		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Sitcom		42	27%
Drama		42	27%
Documentary		9	6%
Sports		43	28%
News		6	4%
Reality Television		14	9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>



Three genres of television took precedence in question number five. They are sitcom, drama, and sports. By a mere 1%, sports prove to be the most popular genre of television among the college students in this study. Although reality television falls to the fourth rank, it did receive 9% of the total votes and is above both documentaries and the news. Taking a look back on the research in chapter 2, I had mentioned the results of a poll conducted at GW University on television viewing habits. Of the students surveyed, 50% chose sitcoms as their favorite genre. Even though only 27% of the students in this survey chose sitcoms, it was still a top choice just as it was at GW University.

**Question #6: Have you ever scene a Reality Television program?**

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Yes		156	100%
No		0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>






As was hoped for, 100% of all the students surveyed have seen a reality television program. Whether or not they are committed to this genre will be looked at in the next question. However, with all of the college students knowledgeable of the research topic, there were no partial surveys and all 156 respondents continued to answer the next eight questions.

**Question #7: On average, how many hours of Reality Television do you watch per week?**

Hours		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
0 – 3		123	79%
4 – 6		29	18%
7 – 10		4	3%
11 – 14		0	0%
15 – 18		0	0%
19 – 21		0	0%
22 or more		0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>

Majority of the students surveyed, or 79%, watch between zero and three hours of reality television a week. Reviewing question number five (What is your favorite genre, or style, of television?) in which reality television was ranked as the fourth popular genre of television, it is only natural that the average weekly hours spent watching reality television were fairly low.

**Question #8: What is your favorite genre, or style, of Reality Television?**

Genre/Style		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Romance-Based		6	4%
Documentary-Based		57	36%
Makeover/Lifestyle-Based		27	18%
Competition-Based		26	16%
Talent-Based		22	14%
Other		1	1%
None		17	11%
<b>Total</b>		156	100%

Looking back on question number five (What is your favorite genre, or style, of television?) documentary television only received 6% of the total responses. However, on this question when asked about their favorite style of reality television, 57% or over half, of the answers are documentary-based. Makeover/lifestyle-based receives 27% of the votes and competition-based is close behind with 26% of the responses.

*For the following statements the power rating scale was used with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest ratings. I will refer to each ranking as follows:*

*1: Very Low Agreement, 2: Low Agreement, 3: Neutral, 4: High Agreement, 5: Very High Agreement*

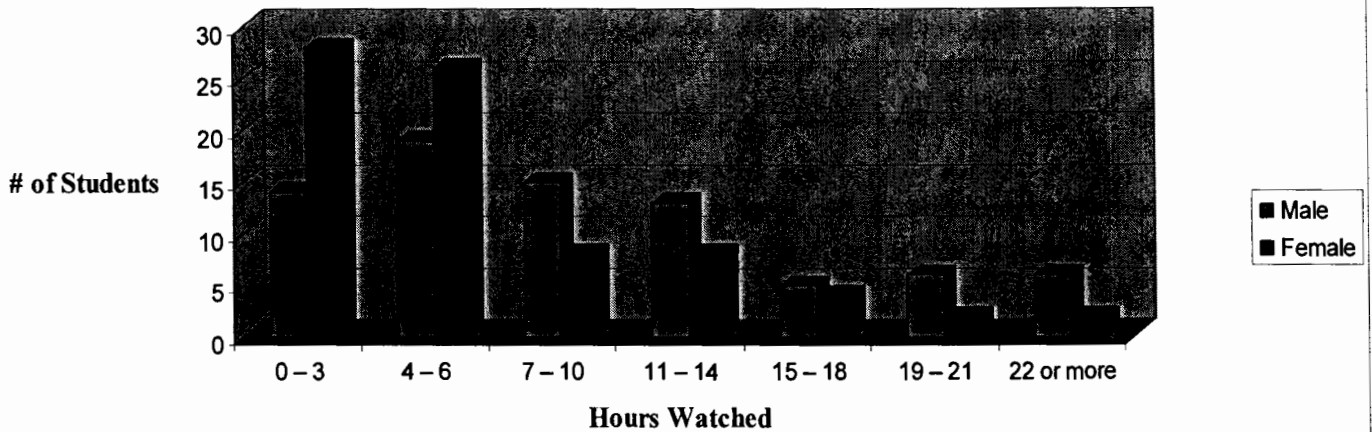
**For the most part I watch reality television for:**

Statement on Survey	1	2	3	4	5
9. An escape from my own reality	93 / 60%	30 / 19%	18 / 12%	10 / 6%	5 / 3%
10. The enjoyment of watching other people's drama	30 / 19%	28 / 17%	34 / 23%	39 / 26%	25 / 16%
11. The interesting characters and/or situations	21 / 13%	24 / 15%	37 / 24%	49 / 32%	25 / 16%
12. The competitive attribute	32 / 21%	34 / 22%	34 / 22%	36 / 23%	20 / 13%
13. The comedic element	15 / 10%	16 / 11%	31 / 20%	63 / 40%	31 / 20%
14. Social Talk (I want to be in the loop with my friends)	66 / 42%	33 / 21%	28 / 18%	20 / 13%	9 / 6%

In the above chart there are two numbers in each box for the rankings 1 through 5. The first number represents the total number of respondents and the second number is the response ratio or percentage. On the whole, statement number 13 (For the most part I watch reality television for the comedic element.) received the highest rating. A total of 60% of all the respondents answered with at least a 4 ranking. Statement number 9 (For the most part I watch reality television for an escape from my own reality.) scored very low with 79% of the answers ranked at levels 1 and 2. When cross-tabulating these six statements based on gender, a closer look and analysis will be discussed on this chart. Overall, the comedic element of reality television was highly favored and using reality television as an escape from ones own reality was not.

After analyzing the overall results of the survey, the next step is to cross-tabulate and analyze what role gender has played in these responses. Through the use of Zoomerang, I was able to cross-tabulate each and every question based on gender. I then brought these values into Microsoft excel and designed bar graphs to create a clear depiction of all the results. Here are the table grids from Zoomerang and bar graphs from Excel that are pertinent in obtaining the final goal or answering the research question that states: Why is U.S. based reality television viewed by female undergraduate students versus male undergraduate students? Of the 78 male and 78 female U.S. college students surveyed, the analysis will include a comparison of general television viewing habits and reality television viewing habits. I will then breakdown the power ranking statements based on gender to depict a clear picture of why male college students watch reality television versus female.

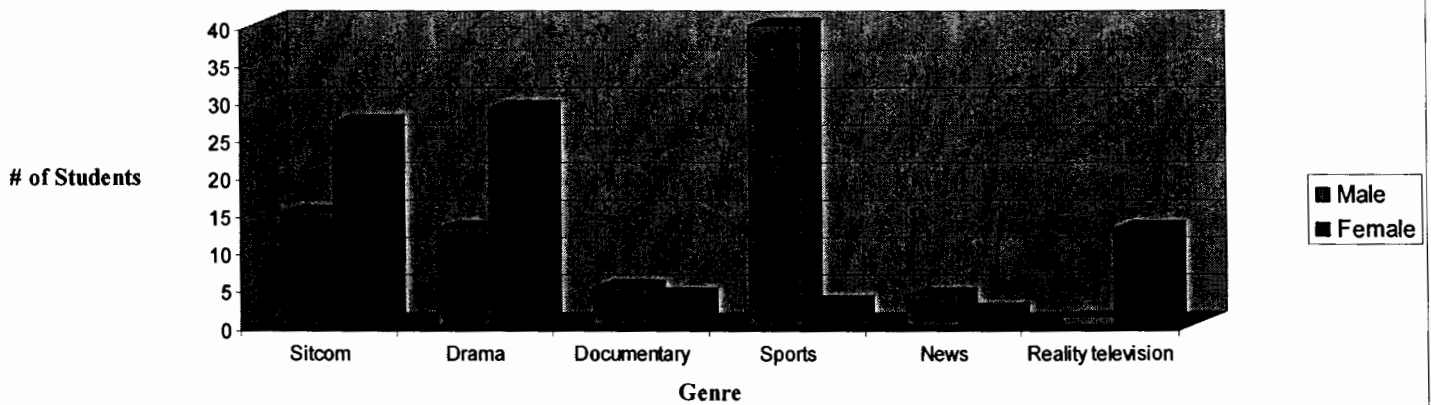


**Question 4 - Average Hours of Television Watched per Week**

Hours of Television Watched	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 10	11 – 14	15 – 18	19 – 21	22 +
# of Male Responses	14	19	15	13	5	6	6
# of Female Responses	28	26	8	8	4	2	2

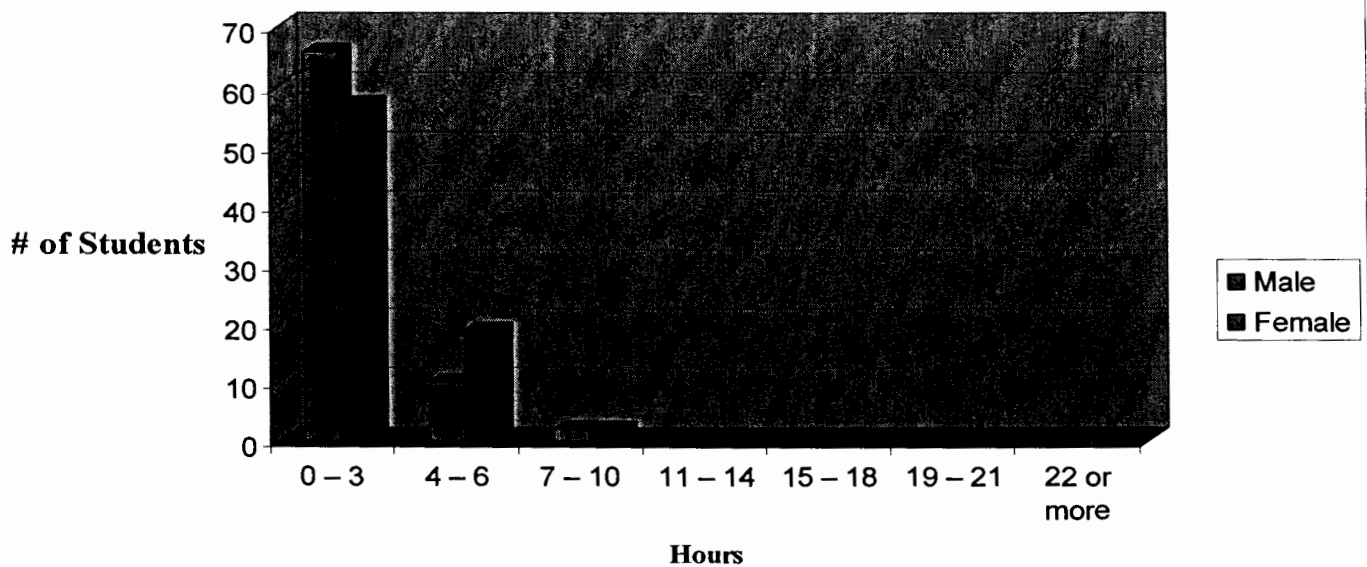
When asked how many hours of television do you watch per week, males who responded are spending more time in front of the tube than females. Looking at the breakdown, 19 males or 12% watch between four and six hours of television per week. Although the highest percentage fell into this slot, over half of the male students, or 58%, watch at least seven hours of television per week. A majority of women who responded to this question, or 69%, watch anywhere from zero to six hours of television per week. By looking at the bar graph, it can be noted that females outweigh the males in the zero to six hour watching categories, while a greater number of males watch at least seven hours per week.

Question 5 - Favorite Genre of Television



Genre/Style	Sitcom	Drama	Documentary	Sports	News	Reality Television
# of Male Responses	15	13	5	40	4	1
# of Female Responses	27	29	4	3	2	13

For this question, there is an almost even split between sitcom and drama as the favored genre of television for females. Drama has 27 or 35% of the responses while sitcoms are close behind with 29 or 37%. Similarly, male respondents only have a two person difference between sitcoms with 15 or 19% of answers and drama with 13 or 17%. College men, on the other hand, have a definite preference for the sports genre that has 40 or 51% of the male response rate. Stereotypes may be into play here citing that in general men watch more sports than women. When focusing on the amount of students that chose reality television has their favorite genre, females definitely prefer this genre over the males. 13 of the 78 female answers, or 17%, say reality television is their favorite in comparison to the 1% of males. According to the GW University study I have referred to throughout this study, it was noted that when asked to choose their favorite television genre, sitcoms were the most popular overall. More specifically, this poll stated that 20% of female students preferred reality or dating programs while 20% of males chose sports programs.

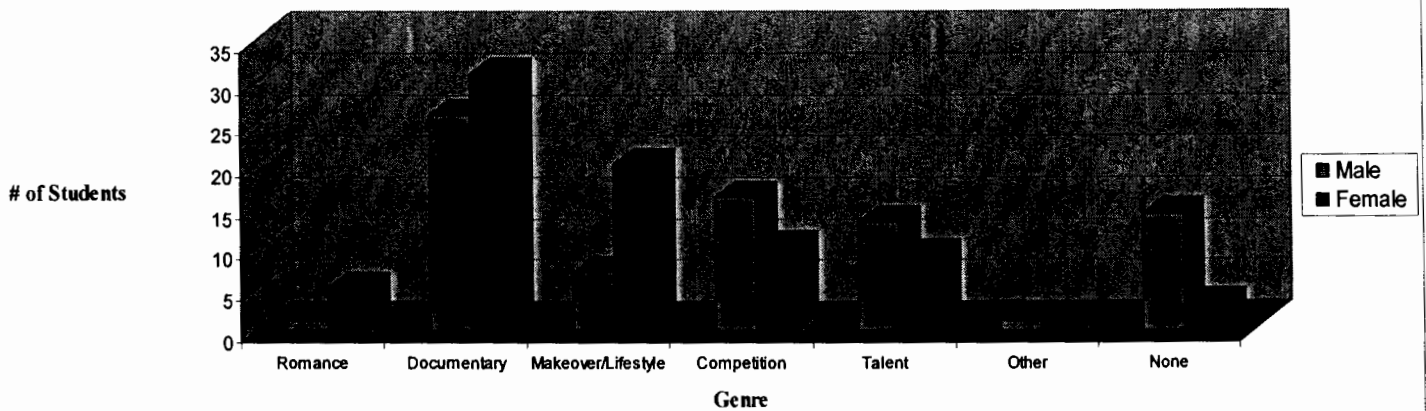
**Question 7 - Average Number of Hours Spent Watching Reality Television per Week**

Hours of Reality Television Watched	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 +
# of Male Responses	66	10	2	0	0	0	0
# of Female Responses	57	19	2	0	0	0	0

The chart shows that an overwhelming 79% of all students surveyed watch between zero and three hours of reality television a week. Breaking this number down, it is 66 or 85% males and 57 or 73% females. It may come across as if reality television is not popular and students are watching very little. However, if you compare the above numbers with the total number of hours spent watching television from question 4; the correlation shows that reality television is consuming a high percentage of total television time. For example, of the female respondents, majority or 69% claimed to watch between zero and six hours of television per week. Think about this, 69% or 54 of the surveyed females spend at most six hours in front of the television. Question 7 shows that up to three of these hours, or half, are spent watching reality television. This is a very large percentage of their television time spent committed to the genre of reality

television. A problem with this question however, is the zero. Although all respondents said that they have seen a reality television program, it is tough to determine whether or not they are watching no reality television, or up to three hours of reality television per week. When comparing male to female response, the college males watch fewer hours of reality television than females. Additionally, since men watch more television in general, the amount of time focusing on reality television is less. As the number spent on reality television viewership increases, the number of responses significantly decreases. No one, either male or female, watches more than ten hours of reality television per week.

Question 8 - Favorite Genre of Reality Television



Genre/Style	Romance	Documentary	Makeover /Lifestyle	Competition	Talent	Other	None
# of Male Responses	1	26	7	16	13	1	14
# of Female Responses	5	31	20	10	9	0	3

The above question asks more specifically about favorite styles of reality television. It is easy to determine whether or not college students are watching reality television, but this question takes a closer look at what type of reality television is preferred. Before reading this analysis, keep in mind the results from the previous question five (What is your favorite genre of television?). For women, sitcoms received 37% of the votes and drama was in a close second with 35%. Men, on the other hand chose sports as the number one style, and this received a 51% response rate. Also in question five, the documentary genre of television received the lowest score. Only five men and four women, or a combined of 6% total selected this option.

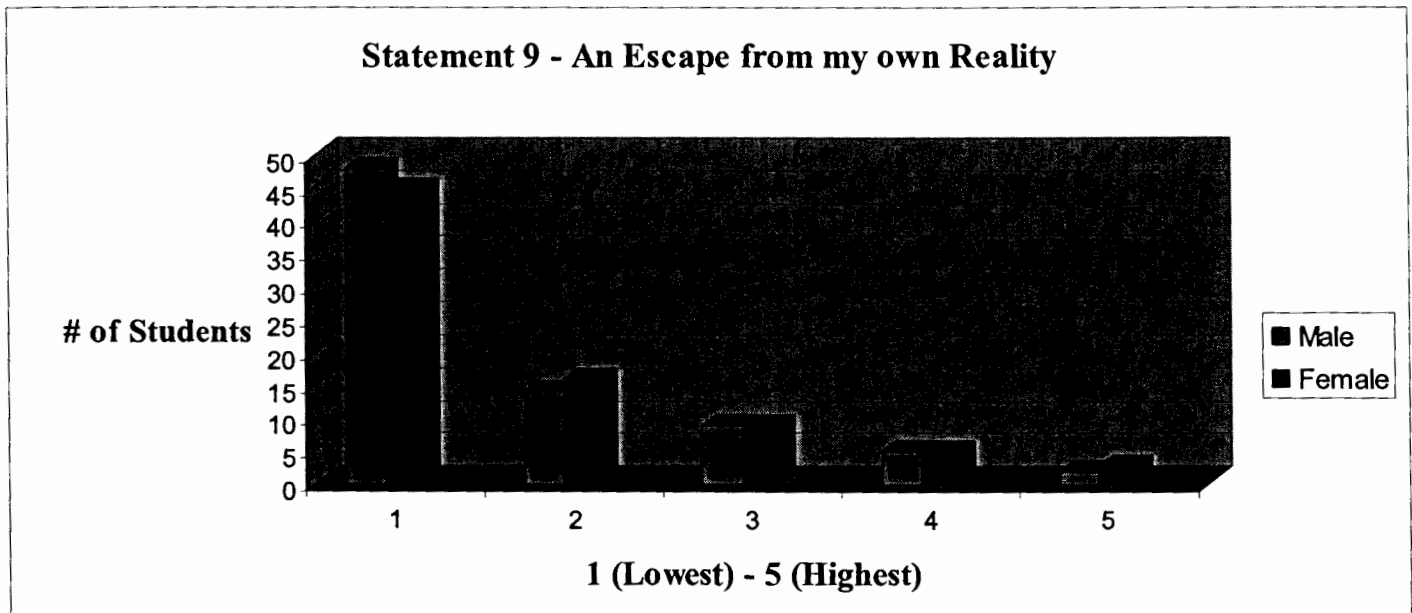
Interestingly enough, looking at the above chart, it is the documentary style of reality television that has the highest numbers. 26 or 33% of males and 31 or 40% of females say this is their favorite style to watch. Taking a closer look at the male responses, competitive reality shows are in second with 16 or 21% ranking. Seeing that most men chose sports as their favorite

overall genre, this makes sense. For the college females, it is the makeover/lifestyle genre that is in second with a response rate of 20 or 26%. For both genders, the romance style is the least favored, with a combined response rate of 4%. Even though 100% of the male respondents admit to seeing reality television, 14 male students or 18% selected none when asked the above question. Either they do not have a preferred genre or reality television, or they do not watch on a regular basis.

*For the following statements the power rating scale was used with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest ratings. I will refer to each ranking as follows:*

*1: Very Low Agreement, 2: Low Agreement, 3: Neutral, 4: High Agreement, 5: Very High Agreement*

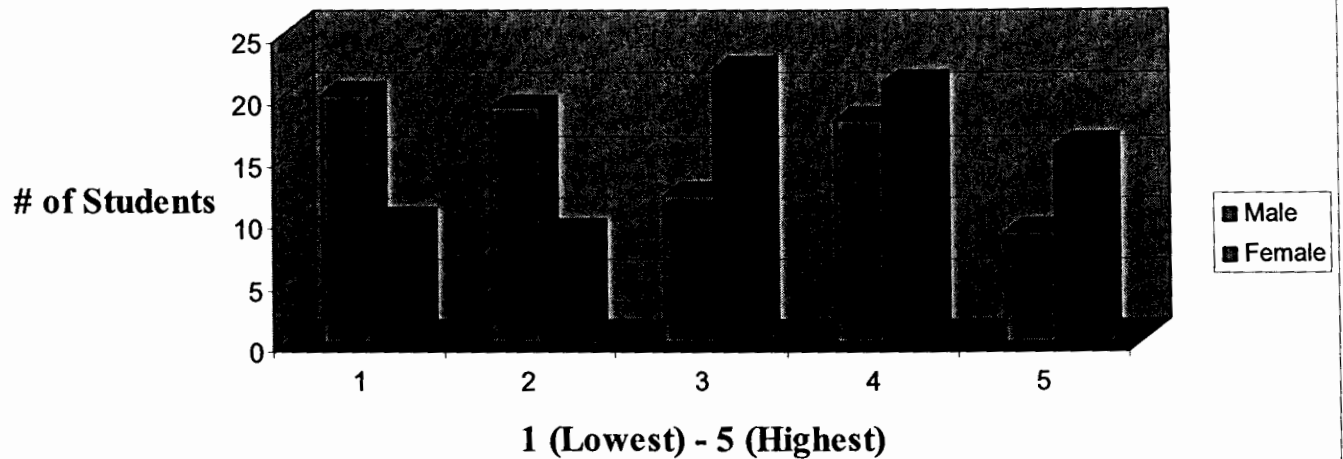
**I watch Reality Television for:**



Ranking	1	2	3	4	5
# of Male Responses	48	14	9	5	2
# of Female Responses	45	16	9	5	3

The response to this question is almost identical for both males and females. Majority of the answers, 45 or 58% of females and 48 or 62% of males have a very low agreement (or answer of 1).

The response rate consistently drops for both genders as the power ranking increases. A mere 3%, or 2 males and 3 females, have very strong agreement (or answer of 5) that reality television provides an escape from their own reality.

**Statment 10 - Enjoyment of Watching other People's Drama**

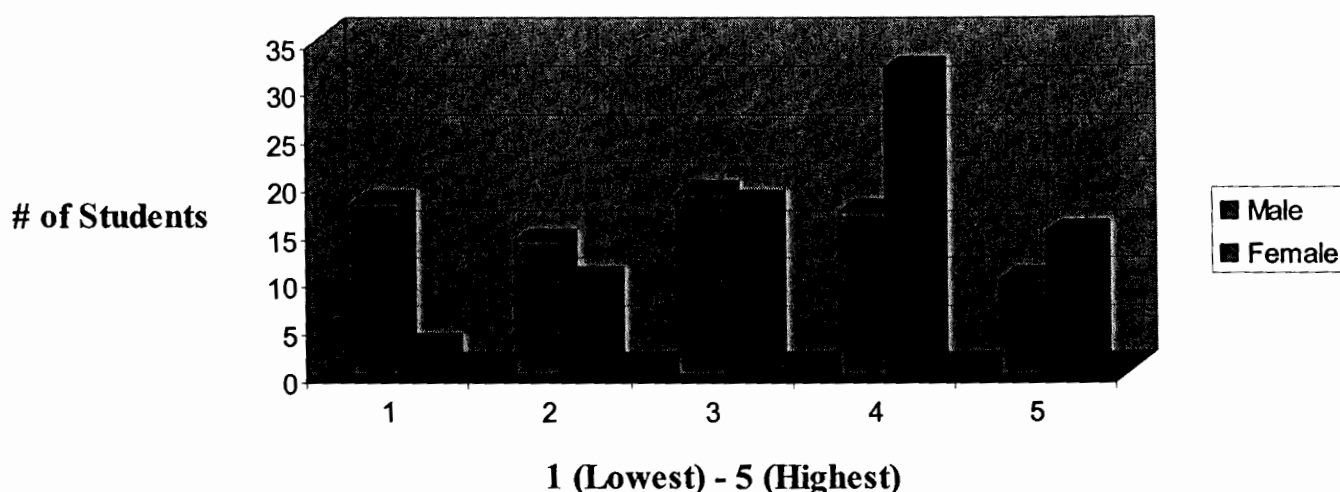
Ranking	1	2	3	4	5
# of Male Responses	20	19	12	18	9
# of Female Responses	10	9	22	21	16

For this statement, there is a slight disagreement between the male and female responses.

Looking at the bar chart, it is apparent that a higher percentage of the males have very low to low agreement (or answers of 1 and 2). Women have a stronger agreement to this statement, and majority of replies were for at least a power ranking of three. More specifically, 20 men or 26% have a very low agreement (or answer of 1) to this statement and 19 men or 24% have a low agreement (or answer of 2). On the flip side, the female college students agree that they watch reality television because of the drama factor. Although most of the females, 22 or 28%, were neutral (or answer 3) a combined 37 or 47% have a high or very high agreement (or answers of 4 and 5). With this said, this question provides a split between low agreement and high agreement between the genders.

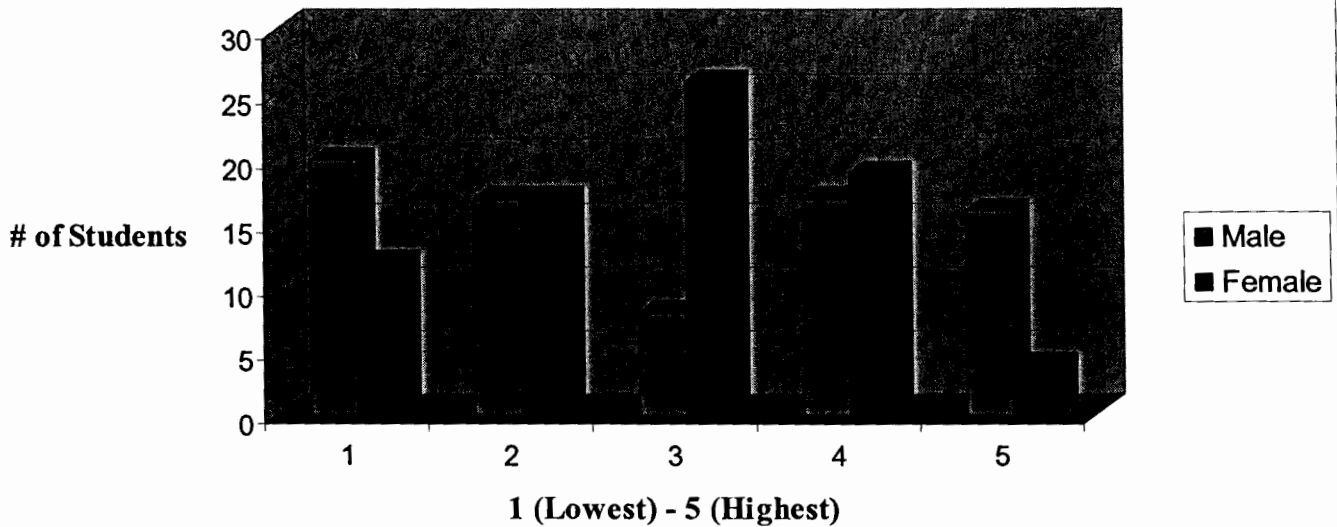


### Statement 11 - Interesting Characters and/or Situations



Ranking	1	2	3	4	5
# of Male Responses	18	14	19	17	10
# of Female Responses	3	10	18	32	15

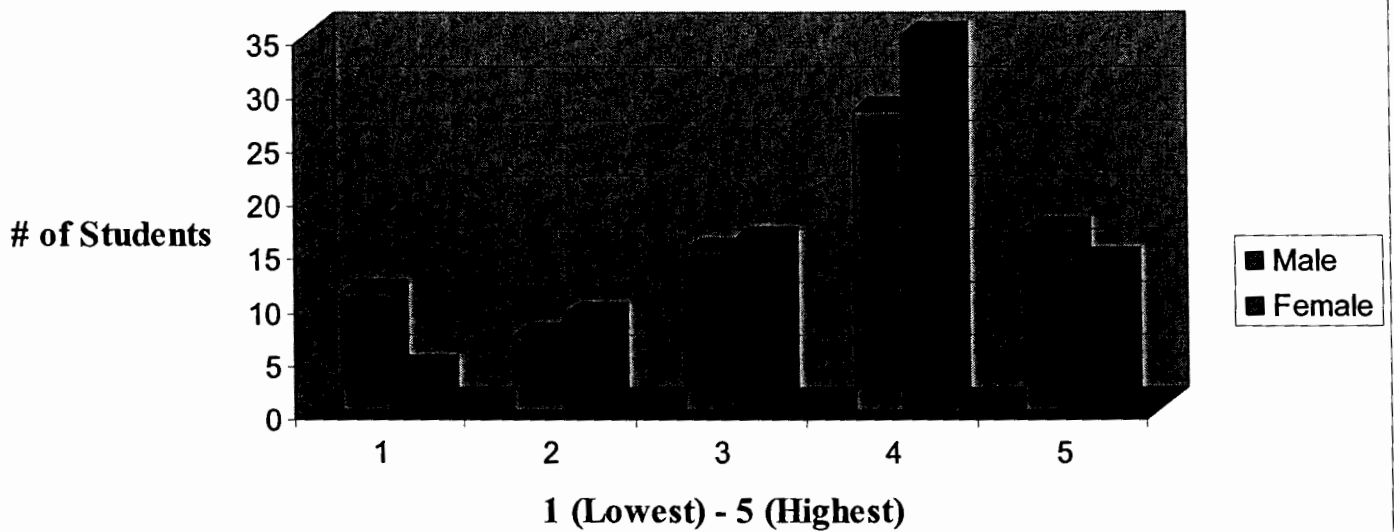
Networks know what they are doing when choosing the cast and situations created for reality television. For this reason, I am not surprised that majority of college students, especially females, are in high agreement with the above statement. Looking at the breakdown of the male responses, however, I am surprised to find an almost even percent of responses ranging from rankings one to five. Most male responses, 19 or 24%, are neutral (or answer of 3) but 18 or 23% have a very low agreement (or answer of 1) and 17 or 22% are in high agreement (or answer of 4). In contrast, 32 or 41% of the females surveyed are in high agreement that they watched reality television for the interesting characters and/or situations (or answer of 4). In comparison to the 23% of males that chose ranking of 1, only 3 or 4% of females selected this very low ranking option.

**Statement 12 - Competitive Attribute**

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5
# of Male Responses	20	17	8	17	16
# of Female Responses	12	17	26	19	4

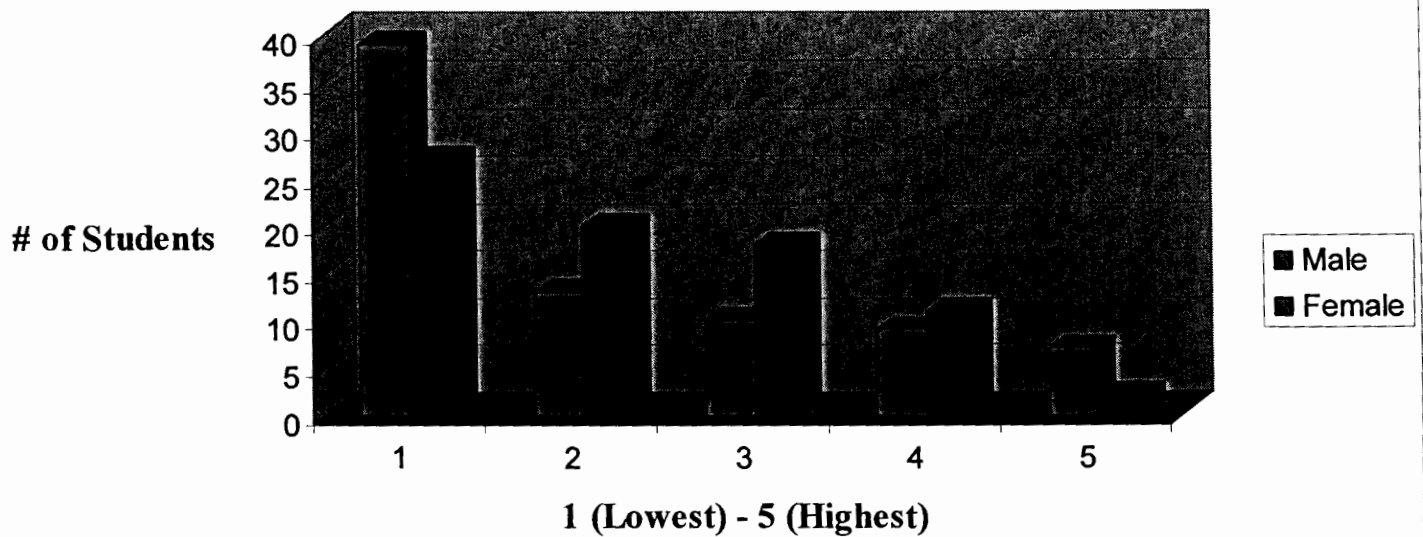
When analyzing the response ratings for this question, for the males it is interesting that there is an almost even split between the lowest and highest rankings. A total of 37 or 47% chose a power ranking of 1 or 2, while 33 or 42% chose ranking of 4 or 5. Only 8 or 10% of the male responses are neutral (or answer of 3). For the women, the neutral ranking (or answer of 3) is most popular with 26 or 33% of responses. Following close behind 19 or 24% of the females are in high agreement with this statement (or answer 4). Lastly, 17 or 22% of females, the same amount as college males, are in low agreement (or answer 2). Overall, however, males and females display different feelings towards the competitive attribute of reality television.

## Statement 13 - Comedic Element



Ranking	1	2	3	4	5
# of Male Responses	11	7	15	28	17
# of Female Responses	4	9	16	35	14

By glancing at the bar chart above, it is noticeable that both the male and female responses follow similar trends. The bars or numbers increase from rankings 2 through 4 and then drop down at ranking 5. The major differences are at the lowest ranking (or answer of 1) only 4 or 5% of females chose this answer in comparison to the 11 or 14% of males. On the higher end of the power ranking (or answer 4) there is also a significant difference between the male and female thoughts. Females outweigh the males with a 35 or 45% response rate in comparison to the lower male survey response of 28 or 36%. On the whole, majority of males and females, or a combined 40%, highly agree (or answer 4) that the comedic element of reality television is a main reason for watching.

**Statement 14 - Social Talk**

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5
# of Male Responses	39	13	10	9	7
# of Female Responses	27	20	18	11	2

Looking from lowest (or answer 1) to highest (or answer 5), the above statement shows a downward slope for both males and females. The major difference is that the male response is much larger for the lowest ranking with 39 or 50%. Ironically, the males also have more responses for the highest ranking (or answer 5) with a score of 7 or 9% in comparison to the females response rate of 2 or 3%. Females, although majority, 27 or 35% are in the very low agreement, this is still 15% less than the male percentage that answered with a power ranking of 1. Almost half of the female responses, or 49%, are in low agreement or neutral (answers 2 and 3). Overall, the responses for this particular question are very different then were expected.

### **Summarizing Survey Results**

When reviewing the above survey analyses, there are a few key points that stood out among the results. On the positive note, I was happy to report that my survey was answered by an equal number of males and females. Additionally, both the age and college level of the respondents had an almost even distribution across the board. Students in their senior year, typically between the ages of 22 and 23, had the lowest representation. On the topic of general television viewing habits, the majority of college students averaged between zero and six hours of television watching per week. Breaking this down by gender, females claimed to watch less television than males. Either the college workload has become more intense, or students are simply not watching as much television as previous studies have claimed. Even though reality television did not rank as one of the most popular genres, it is watched and all 156 respondents claimed to have seen a reality television program. The fact that 100% of the survey takers had seen a reality television show is what truly makes this thesis worth its effort. In the last chapter of this project I will take a closer look at this data and how it relates to the research problem on hand.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose and initial idea behind this study is to bring to light the impact that reality television has on college campuses across the U.S. More specifically, the goal is to determine if gender has any direct link to what college students watch, or more specifically, what reality programs they watch. Some of the general questions that were raised in chapter one of this study include: Do men and women have similar viewing patterns of television in general? Who watches more television? What types of shows are appealing to each gender? Is Generation Y tired of reality television? All of these questions built up to my main objective or research question that reads, why is U.S. based reality television viewed by female undergraduate students versus male undergraduate students? Now that I have done my literature review, conducted both interviews and surveys, and collected and analyzed this data, it is time to bring all of this information together and present my conclusions.

### **My Interpretation**

Before diving into this study, I had never realized the extent of time, research, and analysis that could go into a thesis on reality television. After my conversations with various college students, I was aware of some varying television viewing habits based on gender. However, as previously stated, my specific goal was to take a deeper look at the reality television genre and the college perspective on this style. In order to do this it was vital that I first reviewed the history and defined reality television. Further, I chose to divide this genre into five main categories: documentary, competition, romance, makeover/lifestyle, and talent-based. With this basic framework, I was able to create and distribute my survey to 156 college students, 78

males and 78 females. In the last chapter I conducted a detailed analysis of these results, and now I want to provide my intake on what these results mean.

In general, I think that my survey results were partially what I was expecting and partially unexpected. There were general perceptions that I had prior to starting this study, and after reviewing the results I noticed some of these were proven. The following list shows results from the survey that I had presumed prior to distribution:

- On average, college men watch more television than college women.
- College men chose sports as their favorite genre of television.
- College women chose drama and sitcoms as their favorite genres of television.
- College women watch more reality television than college men.
- College women strongly agreed that they watch reality television for the enjoyment of watching other people's drama.
- College men strongly agreed that they watch reality television for the comedic element.

In addition to these unspoken presumptions, there were two hypotheses that I declared in the first chapter and would like to revisit. I hypothesized that:

1. Female undergraduate students, ages 18-23, watch more U.S. based reality television than males.
2. Of the five types of reality television programs (documentary, lifestyle/makeover, competition, romance, and talent) I have discussed, female undergraduate students, ages 18-23, prefer romance-based reality shows over the other four types. Male undergraduate students, on the other hand, prefer competition based reality shows over the other four types.

Let me compare these above predictions with the results that have been calculated. Looking at number one, it is in fact true that female undergraduate students watch more reality television than male undergraduate students. In survey question number seven, the results showed that 24% of females watched between four and six hours of reality television per week in comparison to only 13% of males. As the number of hours watched decreased the male percentage grew to 85% and the females lagged behind with 73% watching between zero and three hours of reality television per week. Overall, even though majority of both genders watch only between zero and three hour of reality television per week, a greater number of females are watching more hours of this genre.

Hypothesis number one was proven correct; hypothesis number two may not have been as on target. After reviewing question number eight from the survey, the results show that both males and females chose documentary-based reality television shows as their number one preference among the five reality genres. Although this is not what was predicted, after taking a closer look at the male responses, competition-based reality shows did come in a close second with 21% of the votes. On the female side, however, romance-based reality shows came in last place with only 6% of the total response rate. The only comment I can make to back up the original hypothesis is that females did prefer romance-based reality programs over the males with a 1% margin for this style.

Another section of chapter one I would like to return to are the three subsidiary questions that I developed in order to stay focused towards answering my main research question. These questions read:

1. How much reality television are undergraduate students watching?
2. Why do undergraduate students watch reality television?



### 3. What are the direct links between gender and reality television viewing habits?

Questions one is very easy to answer. After looking at the results from question seven of the survey (How many hours of reality television do you watch per week?) the breakdown is as follows. The mainstream, or 79%, of college students surveyed watch between zero and three hours, 29% watch between four and six hours, and only 3% watch between seven and ten hours. Even though this may seem like only a limited amount of time, keep in mind that the average college student surveyed watched, at most, six hours of television total a week. Overall, of the hours spent in front of the tube, this generation is spending a hefty amount of time committed to reality television.

When reviewing the literature I committed to discover why America loves reality television. One of the reasons I mentioned was that that viewers have a desire to blend fact and fantasy, a term coined by Randall Rose and Stacy Wood as “hyperauthenticity.” A second explanation, by Steven Weiss, was that American’s watch reality television because of their desire for status. This is one way in which people can fantasize about becoming famous since they can relate to the characters on the programs. Two final reasons developed by Communication Students at the University of Arizona, was that reality shows provide entertainment and a chance to get a peak into the lives of others.

During this study I developed six statements, based on this research, interviews, and my own thoughts, on why I think college students might choose to watch reality television. The six statements I asked on the power ranking scale were: I watch reality television for....

- An escape from my own reality
- The enjoyment of watching other people’s drama
- The interesting characters and/or situations

- The competitive attribute
- The comedic attribute
- Social talk (I want to be in the loop with friends)

The statement with the highest power ranking, or 60% of the answers with a ranking of at least 4 was that they watched for the comedic attribute. Curt King, the vice president for publicity at NBC has passed remarks that the college market loves “funny, funny comedies” (Gordon, 2002, p.2). On the reverse side, the statement that received the lowest ranking was that they watched for an escape from my own reality. 79% of the answers on this statement came from power rankings of 1 and 2. Another low response was that college students watched for social talk. 42% answered with a ranking of 1 while only 6% chose the highest ranking of 5. I was very surprised by this result because I work in an environment of college students, and television is one of the most talked about subjects. From this study, I have learned that this is not the number one reason why they choose to tune into reality television programs. The remaining three statements (The enjoyment of watching other people’s drama, the interesting characters and/or situations, and the competitive attribute) all had similar overall results. The three statements had at least 65% of the results between the rankings of 2 and 4. Although these statements are not the number one reason why college students watch reality television, this ranking scale did prove that they do have a substantial impact.

In addition to these general results as to why college students watch reality television, the third and final subsidiary question aims to break these answers down by gender, which is also the main objective of this entire thesis. In the previous chapters, I discussed the outcomes and analyzed the results from the power ranking scale, but what do these results prove? What are the true differences between male and female college student’s viewing habits of reality television. I

have already discovered that although women may watch more reality television per week, both genders are familiar and have watched this genre. Additionally, when asked in question number eight for their favorite type of reality television show, majority of college males and females agreed that they preferred documentary shows such as *The Real World* and *The Osbourne's*.

Since these questions did not provide any significant difference between viewership patterns, it is necessary to again review the six statements in the power ranking scale. The statement that had the most extreme difference between college male and female viewpoint was: I watch reality television for the enjoyment of watching other people's drama. Most or 76% of the females chose a rating of three or higher, which means they had strong agreement with the statement. When looking back at my previous research, a study conducted at GW University showed that the female college students preferred reality or dating programs over the males. More specifically, a high percent chose *The Real World* as their most frequently watched show. Both dating programs and documentary type reality shows are based around drama. When comparing the GW survey with my own, my study justifies that female college students do in watch reality shows because of the drama factor.

Now that it has been discovered that one direct link between females and their attraction to reality television is drama, it is time to look at the male response. The statement that males had the strongest agreement to was: I watch reality television for the comedic element. Just how 76% of females watch for drama, 77% of males chose a rating of 3 or higher for comedy. Prior to distributing this survey, all the research I had found on college television viewing habits hinted that males prefer sports over all other genres of television. Once I tallied the answers to my survey, I also discovered that among the college males I surveyed, sports came out on top as the favored genre. Based on this information, I immediately predicted that the direct link

between males and reality television would be the competitive attribute. I was surprised to discover that the comedic element received a much stronger rating than the competitive element. In fact, a greater percentage of women, or 63%, chose ranking of at least 3 for this statement in comparison to only 53% of the men. Although the competitive attribute does have significant impact on both genders decision to watch reality television, when focusing on the male population they would prefer a show with humor rather than one focusing on competition such as *Survivor* or *The Amazing Race*.

### **Suggestions for Television Networks**

Based on research, it was stated that two of the reasons that networks prefer to broadcast reality television shows is because they are inexpensive and they keep the airways fresh. However, it must be taken into consideration that if viewership of reality television drops, in the long run networks will lose. Even though production costs may be lower, they are not free. It has only been in the last few years that major rating companies such as Nielson Median Inc, have began to take a deeper look at the college demographic. The college campus has often been ignored, but yet they have such an impact on ratings in the 18 – 23 year old category. More specifically, the relationship between gender and television viewership on the college campus is a topic that I was unable to find any concrete research on. I hope that major broadcast networks can use my study to gain a better understanding of both overall television viewing habits and more specifically, reality television viewing habits based on gender. More specifically, networks like ABC, NBC, Fox, and MTV, that still air reality television programs on a regular basis, may find this study helpful for when they are choosing what types of reality shows to air and the characteristics that males and females prefer these reality televisions shows to consist of. For

example, ABC's *The Bachelor*, just finished airing its eighth season. Although ratings for this show have dropped, it still captures a significant number of its target audience, young to middle aged females. Based on my study, the reason college women may tune into a show like this are because of the high level of drama and the competitive element the program offers. ABC has discovered what women want to see and has created a long lasting reality series to provide this.

One problem networks face, however, is saturation. There are simply too many reality programs and not all of them create the buzz and addiction of *The Bachelor* or *Survivor*. I do not think reality television is on its way out, but I do think that networks should research and conduct studies like mine. This helps determine what they need to do to keep this genre at its highest ratings level. More specifically, according to my study, 100% of college students have seen a reality television program. They are a main target market that has been raised with this television genre and their thoughts cannot go ignored.

### **Limitations to the Study**

Conducting this study on reality television was a lot harder than I initially expected. Due to my environment and nature of this thesis, I had to place a number of limitations on my work. First, I used only one college campus and set a limit on the number of students that I surveyed. Due to the time constraints on this project, I chose one American college campus that I had access too and these students made up a large majority of surveyors. I do not have exact figures, but can assume that a high percentage of these students are from the tri-state region of the U.S. If I were to use this study on the in a different geographic location, like the west coast, the responses may have been different. Additionally, if this survey were to have been distributed to

a thousand students, it is impossible for me to determine if the outcome would have been the same.

A second and final major limitation which I brought up in chapter one, is that reality television shows have overlapping styles. Even though I grouped the shows into five major categories: documentary, lifestyle/makeover, competition, romance, and talent, almost all networks use two or more of these styles when created programs. When faced with the question, what is your favorite genre of reality television? A student may have selected documentary, but he or she knows that documentaries like *The Real World* are usually filled with romance and competition. However, the only way I could develop this research but to categorize reality shows based on the primary goal of the show.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The study that I conducted has vital information for all major television networks in the U.S. If a network or researcher were to take this study and expand on it, there are a few recommendations that I would offer. First, enlarge the survey and make it more specific. On the ranking scale there are more statements that could and should be asked. Things like, I watch reality television because there is nothing else on or because my roommates/friends are watching. The other major change that I would make on the survey was to have the respondents write in the number of hours they watch reality television per week, rather than check a number grouping. I noticed that a majority of my surveyors selected that they watched between zero and three hours of reality television per week. My survey results would have been more concrete if I had an exact figure for this question. When dealing with one specific genre, there is a huge difference between watching a half hour of reality television versus three hours.

The second recommendation I have is to distribute this survey nationwide. The Zoomerang survey has an option in which they can distribute surveys to a huge database that stretches across the U.S. Due to financial restraints I did not choose to do this, I entered my own e-mail addresses which all came from one University on the east coast. I am interested to see how my research would change if this study is taken to a larger population with even distribution from areas throughout the U.S.

My third and final recommendation is to add focus groups to the research. Prior to designing my survey, I conducted four brief interviews with two college males and females. Their opinions and answers were very helpful in learning what types of questions to ask this population as a whole. My advice for anyone planning to continue on this research question is to incorporate focus groups. There is no better way to gain true understanding of any target market without direct, face to face interaction. If time allowed, I would have met with at least three focus groups and had them look at my results and analysis. This would have ensured that the information that I gathered was accurate and also would have allowed me to learn why college men and women felt this way. It is difficult to determine whether or not a student is actually reading the survey or just quickly checking off answers. Focus groups would make all of the data more concrete.

### **Summary**

Even though reality television has been around since the 1940's, it has really been over the last decade that this genre has created a huge buzz. With trying to keep up with this new genre, ratings companies have begun to branch out and look towards new environments to determine more exact figures for what shows are gaining the most popularity. One area that has

been ignored for too long is the college campus. With hundreds of thousands of students ages 18 – 23, heading off to college for nine months out of the year, this is a crucial target market that can affect the ratings of specific television programs. Sports and sitcoms have always been a huge hit with this age group, but over the last few years, reality television began to take some of the spot light. More specifically, different styles of reality television became popular for different reasons. With this in mind, my goal was to dive even deeper and see if gender at all impacts the viewership patterns of American college students. After reading through this study, you will see that women and men do in fact watch for different reasons. Both the college market and more specifically gender should not be ignored by broadcasters and networks. Reality television is here to stay and it's about time to get a hold of who are viewers are, why they are watching, and what needs to be done to keep the ratings high for this television style.



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## Appendix A

### Thesis Project Interview Questions:

1. How many hours of television do you watch per week?
2. How many hours of reality television do you watch per week?
3. How many reality television shows do you watch on a regular basis?
4. What reality television shows are you currently watching?
5. What reality television shows have you seen, even if not in entirety?
6. Which type of reality television show would you rank as your favorite?
7. What is your favorite genre of television?
8. Why do you watch reality television?
9. Are you hooked on reality television?

## Appendix B

### The Survey

The purpose of this survey is to aid in the research of television viewing habits of American college students. More specifically, the focus will be on the viewing habits of reality television based on one's gender. This research is done to fulfill the thesis requirement of a Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication at Seton Hall University. The results of this survey will help the researcher, Helena Brady, obtain a broader view on if and why college students watch U.S. based reality television.

This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. I would like to thank you in advance for both your time and cooperation. Please note that **all survey responses will be kept confidential**. If you would like to know the final outcome of this survey and the conclusions of the research, please contact me at bradyhel@shu.edu .

1. Please check the box with your gender:

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

2. What year of college are you currently enrolled in?

- ☐ Freshmen  
☐ Sophomore  
☐ Junior  
☐ Senior

3. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ (Must be at least 18 years old to participate)

4. On average, how many hours of television do you watch per week?

- ☐ 0 – 3  
☐ 4 – 6  
☐ 7 – 10  
☐ 11 – 14  
☐ 15 – 18  
☐ 19 – 21  
☐ 22 or more

5. If you were to choose your favorite genre, or style, of television what would it be?  
(Please only mark one box.)

- ☐ Sitcom
- ☐ Drama
- ☐ Documentary
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ News
- ☐ Reality television

**Before moving on to Question number 6, please read the definition below:**

**Reality Television** can be defined as a genre of television programming which generally is unscripted, documenting actual events over fiction, and featuring "ordinary" people over professional actors. Popular Examples of Reality Television Programs include: *The Apprentice*, *The Real World*, *American Idol*, and *Survivor*.

6. Have you ever seen a **Reality Television** program?  
(If your response is yes, please continue to question number 7. If your response is no, you may stop, thank you for taking this survey).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. On average, how many hours of reality television do you watch per week?

- ☐ 0 – 3
- ☐ 4 – 6
- ☐ 7 – 10
- ☐ 11 – 14
- ☐ 15 – 18
- ☐ 19 – 21
- ☐ 22 or more

8. If you had to choose one genre, or style, of reality television to watch, what would it be?

- ☐ Romance-Based (e.g. *The Bachelor*, *Joe Millionaire*)
- ☐ Documentary-Based (e.g. *The Real World*, *The Osbournes*)
- ☐ Makeover/Lifestyle-Based (e.g. *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, *The Biggest Loser*)
- ☐ Competition-Based (e.g. *Survivor*, *Amazing Race*)
- ☐ Talent-Based (e.g. *American Idol*, *The Apprentice*)

Based on the power ranking scale below, with **5** being the **highest** and **1** being the **lowest**, please circle the number that closely represents your opinion.

**For the most part, I watch Reality Television for:**

	<b>High</b>			<b>Low</b>	
9. An escape from my own reality	5	4	3	2	1
10. The enjoyment of watching other people's drama	5	4	3	2	1
11. The interesting characters and/or situations	5	4	3	2	1
12. The competitive attribute	5	4	3	2	1
13. The comedic element	5	4	3	2	1
14. Social talk (I want to be in the loop with friends)	5	4	3	2	1

**THANK YOU!**